The interest in community colleges is building into a feeding frenzy similar to the expansion of the vo-tech system in the early 1970s. Then, a proposal for 40 schools and three branches grew into 52 campuses before legislators were done. The current community college expansion is occurring piecemeal with no overall plan or objectives. Campuses are being authorized, even where the Board of Regents has issued negative feasibility reports.

During the 1997 session alone, the Legislature:

- Created the South Louisiana Community College with seven sites in Acadiana.
- Created the River Parishes Community College in Ascension Parish.
- Created the Louisiana Delta Community College to serve the Monroe area with a principal site in East Carroll Parish.
- Created a learning center in Jefferson Parish with two locations.
- Requested a feasibility study for a community college to serve Grant, Jackson, LaSalle and Winn parishes and another to serve Bienville, Claiborne and Webster.
- Moved the Bossier Parish Community College from the local school board to the state Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities.
-_merged the New Orleans Technical College into Delgado Community College.
- Authorized student fees at the new Baton Rouge Community College.
- Enacted a proposed constitutional amendment authorizing the Legislature to create a community college system and requiring the Board of Regents to submit its recommendation within one year.
- Passed a resolution requiring the Board of Regents to submit its suggested plan for a community college system to a joint legislative committee within 60 days.
- Created a task force to recommend a governance structure for post-secondary technical training and adult education and to report by December 31, 1997.
- Greatly expanded financial aid to resident students to attend colleges or technical schools.
- Created a Workforce Development Commission in the Office of the Governor to coordinate job training programs.
- Created a comprehensive manpower information system.
This report summarizes the findings of a more extensive PAR study of the community college question. It examines important issues involved and recommends an approach to be taken.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

The term “community college” is commonly used in referring to a variety of two-year, post-secondary education institutions. These include junior colleges, two-year branches of senior universities, comprehensive community colleges and degree-granting technical colleges. (A more limited definition would exclude technical colleges which do not grant an associate of arts degree.)

Initially, two-year colleges or “junior colleges” primarily prepared students to transfer to a university. While some still emphasize the transfer function or specialize in occupational and technical training, most now have diverse functions. The following are common functions of today’s “comprehensive community college”:

- First two years of undergraduate work for transfer to a four-year institution.
- Associate degree programs:
  - Transfer degrees (in associate of arts, sciences or fine arts).
  - Terminal (non-transfer) occupational degrees.
- Certificate and diploma programs in vocational and technical training.
- Remediation and adult basic education.
- Skill development and retraining of jobless workers.
- Customized training for business and industry.
- Personal improvement/avocational classes.
- Training for clientele of other state programs such as inmate training and training for welfare recipients.

Currently about 45% of first-time undergraduates in the U.S. attend more than 1,100 public two-year colleges. Their popularity is due largely to their proximity, open admissions and low tuition. Community college students are more likely than those at four-year colleges to be older, part-time, working, under-prepared and minority.

- 13% had been awarded certificates.
- 63% did not attain a degree or certificate during this period but averaged 14 months attendance at the two-year colleges.

Preparing students to transfer is no longer the primary function of most two-year colleges. While few had obtained bachelor’s degrees within five years, nearly half of the transfers were still in school in 1994. The largest group of two-year college enrollees received neither degree nor certificates but attended to serve personal interests: testing the academic waters, specific skill development, retraining and avocational learning.

The NCES study also showed that a student’s socioeconomic status (SES) is related to the likelihood of transfer to a four-year college; 35% of high SES students transferred, compared to 21% of middle SES and 7% of low SES students.

National Results

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) recently reported results of a nationwide study of first-time students entering public two-year colleges in 1989-90. (Louisiana technical colleges are not included because they had not been renamed “technical colleges” and were not offering associate degrees in occupational studies at the time of this study. However, similar “technical colleges” in other states were included.) The data show that after five years:

- 22% had transferred to a four-year institution.
- 6% had attained bachelor's degrees.
- 18% had attained associate degrees as their top award.

HOW ARE COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNCTIONS PROVIDED IN LOUISIANA?

Community college functions are currently provided to varying degrees by a variety of post-secondary public education institutions in Louisiana. These include 13 four-year universities, six two-year colleges and a 44-campus technical college system (formerly called vocational-technical institutes and schools). In addition, there are seven regionally accredited private four-year higher education institutions, one regionally accredited private two-year college
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Louisiana System</th>
<th>Fall 1996 Enrollment (a)</th>
<th>% Change Since 1980</th>
<th>Fall 1996 FTE Enrollment (b)</th>
<th>Fall 1996 State Appropriation Per FTE ($) (c)</th>
<th>Fall 1996-97 Annual Resident UG Attendance Fee ($) (b) (d)</th>
<th>Retention Rate for Fall 1992 FTF (%) (e)</th>
<th>Graduation Rate for 1986 FTF over 10 Year Period (%) (f)</th>
<th>Total Degrees Awarded 1995-96 (b)</th>
<th>Associate Degrees Awarded 1995-96 (b)</th>
<th>Fall 1995 Remedial Rate for FTF (%) (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Bossier Parish C.C. (g)</td>
<td>4,542</td>
<td>228.0</td>
<td>3,631</td>
<td>$1,154</td>
<td>$ 660</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>(5) 214</td>
<td>(5) 214</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Delgado C.C.</td>
<td>14,112</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>8,797</td>
<td>2,142</td>
<td>1,136</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grambling State Univ.</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>6,461</td>
<td>2,839</td>
<td>2,088</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana Tech Univ.</td>
<td>9,272</td>
<td>-7.1</td>
<td>8,310</td>
<td>3,651</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>1,776</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNeese State Univ.</td>
<td>8,087</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>6,985</td>
<td>2,626</td>
<td>2,012</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholls State Univ.</td>
<td>7,210</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>6,005</td>
<td>2,902</td>
<td>2,017</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>161</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northeast Louisiana Univ.</td>
<td>11,128</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10,002</td>
<td>2,978</td>
<td>1,926</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>1,646</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>Northwestern State Univ.</td>
<td>9,037</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>7,922</td>
<td>2,527</td>
<td>2,067</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>1,083</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Elaine P. Nunez C.C.</td>
<td>2,202</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1,208</td>
<td>2,744</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeastern La. Univ.</td>
<td>14,592</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>12,323</td>
<td>2,269</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>1,442</td>
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<td>16,741</td>
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<td>13,878</td>
<td>3,010</td>
<td>1,898</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>Louisiana State University System</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*LSU at Alexandria</td>
<td>2,431</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>1,513</td>
<td>3,223</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>168</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU at Baton Rouge</td>
<td>26,916</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>22,667</td>
<td>4,926</td>
<td>2,663</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>4,369</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>*LSU at Eunice</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU at Shreveport</td>
<td>3,952</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2,642</td>
<td>3,416</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. of New Orleans</td>
<td>15,665</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>10,768</td>
<td>3,208</td>
<td>2,382</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>1,901</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern University System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU at Baton Rouge</td>
<td>10,258</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>9,692</td>
<td>3,515</td>
<td>2,028</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>1,273</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>SU at New Orleans</td>
<td>4,242</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>3,518</td>
<td>2,631</td>
<td>1,662</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*SU at Shreveport/Bossier City</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>4,692</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: (1) An asterisk * indicates a two-year institution.
(2) The Louisiana State University System information does not include data for the LSU Medical Center or the Paul M. Hebert Law Center.
(3) FTE=Full-Time Equivalent; FTF=First-Time Freshman; UG=Undergraduate.
(4) Fees are based on two semesters or three quarters.
(5) Includes academic certificates.

SOURCE: (a) Louisiana Board of Regents Information Services Division 14th Class Day Enrollment.
(b) Louisiana Board of Regents as reported in State of Louisiana FY 1997-98 Executive Budget.
(c) Louisiana Board of Regents and the Office of Planning and Budget as reported in '1997 State of the State Report'.
(d) Board of Regents Statewide Student Profile System.
(e) Louisiana Board of Regents in '97 Accountability in Louisiana's Colleges and Universities.
(g) Data for Bossier Parish Community College provided by Bossier Parish Community College.
and a number of licensed proprietary vocational schools.

The public higher education institutions are organized under three management boards. (See Table 1.) The Louisiana State University (LSU), Southern University and University of Louisiana systems each include large and small four-year universities and one or more two-year colleges. The Board of Regents provides an oversight, policy, and coordination role that was strengthened by Act 1360 of 1997.

Despite the complex governance design, the location of the state’s post-secondary institutions makes them reasonably accessible to most residents. Access is also facilitated by the open admissions policies at all of the public institutions, except four (LSU, LSU-Shreveport, University of New Orleans and Louisiana Tech).

**Two-Year Colleges**

Currently six two-year colleges are in operation in Louisiana (excluding the technical colleges). They are under three different management boards. Several additional colleges have been authorized.

**Existing Schools**

The six currently operating two-year colleges (excluding technical colleges) are key to any discussion of creating a community college system. Often these are referred to as “community colleges” and are obvious building blocks for any future system.

Enrollments in these two-year colleges doubled between 1980 and 1996. Still the head count was only about 27,000 for the 1995-96 school year, the full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment was less than 18,000.

Although Louisiana has few two-year colleges (excluding vo-tech), the state is not unique. Eleven other states had lower FTE enrollments in public two-year colleges, relative to population, in 1993-94. Most of these were smaller rural states, but also included were Indiana, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

Only about 14% of Louisiana’s higher education students were enrolled in two-year colleges compared to 39% nationally, according to Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) data for fall 1994.

However, Louisiana and some other states with low two-year college enrollments have extensive vo-tech systems that offer many programs similar to those at community colleges in states without vo-tech schools.

The Nunez and Bossier Parish community colleges also offer a broad range of programs although operating on a much smaller scale than Delgado.

The three two-year colleges in the LSU and Southern systems (LSU-Alexandria, LSU-Eunice and Southern University-Shreveport/Bossier City) function more as junior colleges emphasizing preparation for transfer to senior institutions.

The Nunez Community College was formed in 1992 by a merger of the former St. Bernard Parish Community College and the Elaine P. Nunez Vocational-Technical Institute (both formerly under the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education). As a merger prototype, this college is being closely watched. Some in the vo-tech community have characterized the new college as emphasizing academics at the expense of the technical programs. The college counters that the number of programs and enrollments in both the technical and academic areas have increased since the merger.

One aspect of the merger that appears successful is the upgrading of the vo-tech school instructors’ credentials to meet college accrediting criteria. Eight of 17 instructors had to achieve associate degree status and all did within 18 months.

Recent legislation merged the Louisiana Technical College at New Orleans into Delgado as a new Division of Occupational Studies effective July 1, 1997. This arrangement expands Delgado’s facilities thus saving it an estimated $18 million in construction costs.

"Louisiana’s four-year institutions . . . provide many of the functions performed by community colleges in other states."
The two campuses are adjacent to one another.

**New Schools Authorized**

A Baton Rouge Community College is slated to open in fall 1998. Initially, it will emphasize junior college functions—general education and transfer programs.

The Baton Rouge Community College is being developed under yet another form of governance—a temporary joint arrangement between the LSU and Southern boards under a court-ordered desegregation settlement.

1997 legislation created a new South Louisiana Community College and was based on recommendations of a Board of Regents' task force. Domiciled in Lafayette, the "mortarless" college will serve the seven-parish Acadiana area. Each parish may have a campus or site using public technical college facilities where possible. The college will use cooperative agreements and contracts with the University of Southwestern Louisiana, LSU-Eunice, the nearby technical colleges, high schools and other public or private institutions for facilities and support services.

Cooperative arrangements are required to assure articulation and transfer of credit among the institutions. The college is scheduled to open for the 1999-2000 school year, and will be under the Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities.

Amendments to this legislation also authorized additional separate colleges and sites subject to funding that was not provided during the 1997 legislative session.

**Universities**

Ten of Louisiana's 13 four-year universities were originally two-year colleges, branches of LSU or Southern or industrial institutes. In 1970 alone, six four-year colleges were declared "universities" by the Legislature.

Louisiana's four-year institutions, particularly the open-admissions regional universities, provide many of the functions performed by community colleges in other states, such as the bulk of the freshman and sophomore level education, remedial education, associate degree programs, extension and evening programs, avocational courses and specialized occupational training (e.g., fire and police training). The universities also offer courses at satellite learning centers and are using distance learning technologies.

**Technical College System (Vo-Tech Schools)**

The Louisiana Technical College System provides post-secondary vocational and technical education that would be found at a comprehensive community college in a state without specialized vo-tech institutions. The state's vo-tech system was renamed the Louisiana Technical College System (LTCS) in 1995 by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BSE) and began offering terminal associate degrees in occupational studies. BSE administers the system through an office in the State Department of Education (SDE).

Each of the 44 campuses has its own director and support staff. In
TABLE 2
Louisiana Technical College System Performance Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1995-96</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative/Support Expenditures</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(as a percent of total expenditures)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Cumulative Head Count Enrollment¹</td>
<td>42,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomas Awarded</td>
<td>4,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Awarded</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Completers²</td>
<td>11,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completions</td>
<td>16,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade, Specialized, Customized and Quickstart programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Placements³</td>
<td>11,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Placements⁴</td>
<td>15,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Full-Time Equivalent Student Enrollment⁵</td>
<td>12,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Equivalent, Preparatory Only</td>
<td>11,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Equivalent, Extension Only</td>
<td>923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Full-Time Student Tuition is $105 per quarter but can go up to $180 per quarter for associate degree programs at some schools.

SOURCE: Louisiana Technical College System

¹ Total number of all students enrolled for the 1995-96 school year, includes full-time, part-time, and extension students.
² Core Completer—A student, in a full accredited program, who has demonstrated the competencies required for a program and has been awarded the appropriate completion document, or has acquired sufficient competencies for employment in the field of training or a related field.
³ Preparatory Placement—A Preparatory Completer who has obtained employment in the field or related field as a result of training.
⁴ Upgrade programs—A program for employed or unemployed individuals to improve existing skills or acquire new skills.
⁵ Includes the conversion of part-time students to full-time equivalency.

addition, seven branch or extension campuses and programs in 11 correctional facilities are adminis-
tered by a nearby main campus. Each campus is equipped with two-way satellite video capability to allow distance learning.

As shown in Figure 1, there is a campus within 25 miles of almost every Louisiana resident.

The colleges are accredited by a special national accrediting agency for vocational-technical programs—the Council on Occupational Education (COE). The two-year occupational associate degrees granted by the technical colleges and accredited by COE require fewer general education courses than the academic associate degrees offered at the colleges and universities accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The cumulative enrollment of 42,862 students reported for the 1995-96 school year includes all enrollees whether they attended for one week or all year, full or part-time, day or night. (See Table 2.) The day or preparatory programs include the core courses of study (nursing, welding, etc.), quick start training and custom preparatory training for employment in a specific business. The system's 1995-96 FTE day enrollment was 11,393, an average of less than 260 FTEs per campus. However, day FTEs ranged from 81 at the smallest school to 1,078 at the largest.

The evening or extension programs include upgrade programs to improve the skills of the employed or unemployed and customized upgrade programs for employees of a certain business or industry. While thousands are enrolled each year, these programs are often quite brief. On an annual FTE basis, the 1995-96 evening enrollment for the entire system was well under 1,000.

Vo-tech Programs

The system offers training in 67 programs. Nine of the schools offer 15 or more programs—23 is the most offered. Twelve schools offer 10-14, and 23 have fewer than 10. One-fourth of the schools offer six or fewer programs.

Another 35 programs are offered in five or fewer schools and include some of the more advanced technological occupations such as Microcomputer Technology, Biomedical Equipment.
Technology and Surgical Technology. The bulk of the system’s programs are geared to the general business, service, health and construction industries.

In 1995-96, the technical colleges awarded their first occupational associate degrees under the new LTCS. A total of 281 degrees was awarded with each of 25 schools awarding at least one. The Sowela Technical College alone accounted for 143 of these degrees, the bulk of which were in a special program to upgrade technical college instructors, many of whom are experienced craftsmen with little or no post-secondary education. The instructors were awarded an Associate of Applied Technology Degree in Occupational Education.

As is the case with higher education, funding for vo-tech education has not enjoyed constitutional or statutory protection. As part of the “cuttable” 30% of the state budget, vo-tech funding suffered a number of cuts during the 1980s. State general fund appropriations to vo-tech in 1996-97 were about the same as in 1984-85. Total vo-tech spending rose 46% during this period, due to the initiation of tuition and increased federal funding; however, this increase fell short of keeping up with inflation.

WHAT DO OTHER STATES DO?

The role, governance and financing of community colleges varies widely among the states. Louisiana is at one end of the spectrum. It has few two-year academic colleges and these are not systematically placed within the structure of higher education.

At the other end of the spectrum are states like California and Florida that have designed logical three-tier systems of higher education. In these states, the first tier is an extensive system of open admissions, comprehensive community colleges. A second tier of regional universities admits better than average students. A third tier of research universities accepts only the top students. Those who prove themselves at one level can move up.

California

The California Community Colleges System includes 106 colleges in 71 community college districts (each with a locally elected board of trustees) all under a state Board of Governors for Community Colleges. The system enrolls nearly 1.3 million students, 70% of whom are part-time. The overall transfer rate (21%) is near the national average of 22%, but the rates at individual colleges range from 4% to 37%. Transfer students make up half of the graduates from the second tier California State Universities and one-fourth of the first-tier University of California graduates. Funding per FTE student, including general funds, local property taxes and tuition, varied widely by system for 1995-96:

- University of California, $16,218;
- California State Universities, $8,425; California Community Colleges, $3,308.
Florida

Florida developed its higher education system based on an overall plan. Today, 28 community colleges enroll nearly 800,000 students—an average of over 28,000 per college. The Miami-Dade Community College enrolls over 100,000. The system operates under a state board of community colleges with local boards providing local control. The system is the primary undergraduate entry point, and about 23% of enrollees transfer to one of Florida’s nine four-year public institutions.

North Carolina

North Carolina’s system of 58 community colleges is the second largest in the U.S. and is the product of a merger of two-year colleges and industrial education centers. It is governed by a separate board. The system enrolls one in seven adults and one-third of all high school graduates. It awards one-fifth of the high school diplomas and offers 269 technician and vocational curriculum programs. This system of small (average 2,600 students) primarily technical colleges is well suited to serve the small specialized manufacturers scattered across this highly industrialized state.

The system’s much lower than average transfer rate reflects its vocational and technical emphasis. Of the 236,000 enrollees in credit programs in 1995-96, fewer than one-third were in transfer programs. Another 544,000 were enrolled in short-term continuing education programs.

Trend Toward Consolidation

A number of states are in the process of organizing and consolidating an assortment of junior colleges, community colleges and technical colleges into more efficient and coordinated systems. Alabama, for example, had 44 typically small, two-year colleges in 1986 including 14 designated as junior colleges. The total has been reduced to 31 including 19 community colleges, 10 degree-granting technical colleges and only two junior colleges.

Since 1995, Minnesota has consolidated 24 of its community and technical colleges into 11 colleges, often by merging neighboring academic and technical schools. Today, the state includes 21 community colleges, 34 technical college campuses and seven state universities in one system.

In a reorganization enacted this year, Kentucky has created a combined community and technical college system. The state’s 13 community colleges are being moved from under the University of Kentucky and brought together with 25 technical schools under a new administrative board. The aim is to reduce duplication of programs.

DOES LOUISIANA NEED MORE COMMUNITY COLLEGES?

The various proposals for an expanded community college system have offered little hard data to quantify the extent of the “need.” The issues are not cut and dried, and the available data raise questions about how big a need exists in Louisiana.

The data seem to indicate a much greater need for basic reading, writing and math and short-term skill training than for expanded associate degree programs.

What Is The Board Of Regents’ Position?

The Board of Regents has the constitutional responsibility “to study the need for and feasibility of any new institution of post-secondary education...” The Legislature may take affirmative action on such a proposal, by two-thirds vote, only after the Regents’ report is filed or after one year if no report is filed. While the Regents’ position is important, it is not controlling. In creating the River Parishes Community College this session, the Legislature has shown a willingness to override the Regents’ recommendations.

The Regents said there was a need for a community college system in its 1976 and 1984 Master Plans. The 1994 Master Plan recommended that the state develop a plan for a community college system. Until then, the Regents recommended that existing institutions expand community college-type services.
In response to a 1993 legislative resolution requiring it to submit a plan for a community college system, the Regents set up a task force and submitted a report in March 1995.

The Regents stated its position in a March 1995 report as follows:

- An organized statewide system of community colleges is needed, not a series of independent community colleges under numerous boards.
- Higher education should be funded at the southern average before any new institutions are created.
- The source of financial support for any new community colleges must be identified and committed prior to their creation.
- The community college system should include at least one college in each of the eight economic development regions of the state including:
  - A Baton Rouge community college mandated by the desegregation agreement,
  - A Lafayette area community college to allow selective admissions at USL, and
  - A new community college to be created in each of the three regions currently without a two-year college—Houma/Thibodaux, Lake Charles and Monroe.
- Until the system is in place, the regional universities should continue providing community college services.
- The number of community colleges could be minimized by using satellite locations to expand services.

The Regents took no firm positions on the governance of a new system, the form of the new colleges (except for the Lafayette area) or the question of converting technical colleges. However, the Regents suggested continuing the existing governance and later considering a separate community college board. The Regents’ upcoming report, required by a 1997 legislative resolution, will likely address the governance issue more directly.

In the 1995 regular session, the Legislature adopted study resolutions and bills to create a number of community colleges. The Regents’ staff was given little time to do adequate feasibility studies. Its report, prior to the 1996 regular session dealt with the various proposals using criteria set down in its March 1995 report.

The Board recommended against a proposal to convert the T. H. Harris Technical College into a free-standing community college and against another to create a new college on Jefferson Parish’s west bank by merging a campus of Delgado and a technical college. The board also recommended delaying consideration of proposed colleges for the river parishes, the Florida parishes and Livingston Parish because of their potential impact on the Baton Rouge Community College.

At the end of March 1997, Regents completed a year-long feasibility study supporting the creation of a community college in the Lafayette area as discussed previously.

**Common Needs Cited**

Proponents argue that Louisiana needs more community colleges to:

- Increase access to higher education.
- Provide schooling in close proximity to students.
- Offer lower cost education opportunities.
- Expand associate degree offerings.
- Serve more nontraditional (under-prepared, older, part-time and minority) students.
- Permit the universities to better pursue their missions.
- Meet job training needs and spur economic development.

**To Increase Access to Baccalaureate Degrees**

Census estimates for 1996 show that 19.2% of Louisiana’s adult population has attained at least a bachelor’s degree. This estimate is up from the 1990 census figure of 16.1% and is closing in on the U.S. average of 23.6%.

Only 23.2% of all job openings nationally are judged to require a bachelor’s degree or more, according to the U. S. Department of Labor. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) has reported projections that the number of college graduates between 1994 and 2005 will exceed the number of job openings requiring bachelor’s degrees by nearly 29%.

Considering the state’s relatively high per-capita production of bachelor’s degrees in recent years, expanded access may not be a serious need. Some analysts view the number of college graduates nationally as excessive in light of job demands.

**To Expand Access through Geographic Proximity**

As shown in Figure 2, the state is well covered with open admissions higher education institutions. A few rural areas with low population are left out of the reasonable commuting range. The northeast
corridor is one of those areas. Whether such an area could support a full-fledged college is questionable. High school graduates in many of the more isolated rural parishes have college enrollment rates at the state average despite the lack of a nearby campus, according to Board of Regents data.

Universities already operate a number of satellite learning centers, and there is further potential for increased use of this approach. Extension programs and distance learning through facilities such as those available at the numerous technical colleges offer other means to overcome geographic barriers.

To Expand Access by Offering Lower Cost Alternatives

Louisiana’s production of bachelor’s degrees appears to be at least as high as that of states that make a far greater use of community colleges. While the majority of Louisiana’s students are enrolled in four-year institutions, spending per FTE student has been less in Louisiana than in states which rely much more heavily on the generally less-costly two-year schools.

Student’s cost to attend a two-year college in Louisiana and the SREB states is typically about half the cost at a regional four-year college. Tuition charges are a matter of public policy. A two-year college student’s annual costs ranged from $365 in California to $2,441 in Massachusetts in 1995.

Cost is obviously a deterrent to some; however, most students now use federal or state financial assistance. The state’s revamped student aid program should erase tuition problems for above average students in the future if funding is continued.

Students who cannot qualify for free tuition would still be potential community college enrollees. How many would opt for a cheaper two-year school over a university? Would they be better served? These questions should be answered before we embark on a major expansion of the number of community colleges.

To Expand Associate Degree Offerings

The Board of Regents’ study of graduation rates for 1986 college freshmen showed that one-third (33.5%) graduated within six years. The board estimates that approximately 45% would be shown to graduate eventually if the follow-up period were extended to 10 years. It might be argued that if the students who failed to earn a four-year degree had enrolled initially in a community college, a substantial number might have earned an associate degree.

The question then is whether an associate degree from a two-year college would have been more valuable than a year or two of study at a four-year university.

U.S. Bureau of the Census estimates of mean earnings for Louisiana workers by educational attainment in 1990 show only a $300 advantage for those with an associate degree over those having “some college.”

In the South, those with associate degrees as opposed to “some
college" earned an average of $467 more. However, the difference varied widely even among states that offer a larger number of associate degrees. In North Carolina and Florida, for example, a person with an associate degree as opposed to "some college" earned an average $1,206 and $884 more respectively, while in Mississippi those with associate degrees earned an average of $719 less than those with "some college."

To Expand Services to Nontraditional Students

The Board of Regents contends that there is a large pool of potential students who could benefit from community college programs, but it has made no estimates or projections. However, projections by a regional group show that by year 2007 the state will have 16% fewer high school graduates, thus a declining source of traditional college students.

According to SREB estimates, the college enrollment rate for Louisiana high school graduates (54%) compared well with the southern state average (52%) and even the U.S. (56%). The problem is that Louisiana's high school graduation rate is so low (58.5% in 1994 compared to 70.1% for the nation). Many Louisiana students are dropping out or exiting high school unprepared or ill-prepared to pursue a higher education.

Studies show that several factors contribute to this. Louisiana parents are among the least educated and poorest in the nation. Thirty percent of the state's children live in poverty. Less than 10% of the state's high school students are taking the Regents-recommended college preparatory curriculum.

According to SREB data, a relatively low percentage of Louisiana undergraduate enrollment attends part-time—26% in 1994 compared to 39.7% for the South and 41.5% for the nation. It should be noted that the data do not include the many nontraditional students attending Louisiana's technical colleges nor those signed up for university extension courses. In other states, many of these students would likely be counted as community college enrollees.

If there is a pool of potential non-traditional students waiting for community colleges to open, it is unclear how large the pool is and where it is located.

"The data seem to indicate a much greater need for basic reading, writing, math and short-term skill training than for expanded associate degree programs."

To Expand Minority Participation

According to SREB data, in 1994 blacks comprised 31.6% of Louisiana's population and 25.7% of its college enrollments. Thus Louisiana blacks had an enrollment share that was 81.3% of their population share (25.7 divided by 31.6 = 81.3%). This black enrollment/population ratio was somewhat lower than the southern average (84.0%) but slightly higher than that of the U.S. (80.8%). (The impact of out-of-state enrollment at black universities was not factored out.) The effect more community colleges might have in encouraging greater minority participation is difficult to determine. Some states with extensive community college systems have higher ratios than Louisiana—Alabama (88.7%), Florida (87.6%) and North Carolina (89.2%). However, Mississippi, with the second highest share of students in two-year colleges in the South, had a black enrollment/population ratio slightly lower than Louisiana's (81.1%).

To Allow Universities to Pursue their Missions

Community colleges could relieve the four-year schools in Louisiana of the burden of remedial education thus freeing them to set admission standards and pursue their higher missions. However, this could mean a drastic reduction in university enrollments—perhaps up to half of the freshman class—if remedial students were no longer admitted.

How would universities respond to a major loss of enrollments? They would likely seek to retain their level of support through some type of "hold-harmless provision." They might even follow the lead of Alabama's universities and encourage heavy out-of-state enrollments to preserve their funding, programs and jobs.
To Meet Job Training Needs and Spur Economic Development

No recent community college proposal has attempted to assess the actual educational requirements for job openings in the near future. Most refer generally to a need for more technical training or post-baccalaureate education. However, in projecting job openings nationally, the U.S. Labor Department has categorized them by their educational requirements.

By these projections, fully two-thirds (68.8%) of all job openings in the U.S. between 1994 and 2005 will not require formal post-secondary education. However, many of these jobs will require a mastery of high school math, English and reading. Some will require formal apprenticeships and many will increasingly require technical skills training on the job or otherwise. The percentages of the job openings projected to require either post-secondary vocational training or an associate degree are relatively small—3.2% and 4.8% respectively.

Projections of Louisiana job openings between 1994 and 2005 were recently released by the Louisiana Department of Labor. The results of PAR’s cursory assessment of the minimum training needs for these job openings generally parallel those of the national study. About 22% of the annual new job openings require a bachelor’s degree or more. Only 14% of the jobs clearly require some post-secondary technical training or an associate degree (somewhat higher than the combined 8% estimated nationally).

And, about 64% of the jobs could be filled by a high school graduate, with apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR CREATING A COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

In the absence of a well-documented need, the state should move cautiously before it creates any new community colleges.

If it is determined that a new community college is needed, it could be created in a number of ways—each with different costs, advantages and disadvantages. The feasibility of an option also differs depending on the existing institutions in an area. The following are basic options:

- Build a new free-standing campus.
- Convert a technical college.
- Convert a four-year university.
- Create a community college division within a four-year university to operate on or off campus.
- Create a “mortarless” college by contracting for existing facilities and more satellite learning centers, and use technology to offer college extension courses, perhaps at technical colleges. The technical colleges could also assume remediation responsibilities.

To develop a statewide system and make the best use of limited resources, the options must be carefully selected to meet the needs of both the state and the communities and provide service at the least cost without duplication.

IS A STATEWIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE "SYSTEM" NEEDED?

The question of the need for more community colleges in Louisiana must be separated from the question of the need for a new system. There is a need for a unified system to oversee community college-type functions regardless of whether they need to be expanded because:

- Supervision of community college functions is now fragmented among all three higher education management boards and BESE.
- If funded, 1997 legislation will have tripled the number of community college campuses or locations. (The Legislature could add others.)
- The academic and vo-tech functions have separate management and oversight boards, accreditation and budgeting.
- The state’s emerging emphasis on workforce development requires a coordinated effort to meet occupational education and training needs.

"The current community college expansion is occurring piecemeal with no overall plan or objectives."

| 12 |
Essential Criteria

A statewide community college system should:

- Focus on providing services to students, not on creating institutions.
- Use existing facilities to the greatest extent possible to meet new or expanding education and training needs.
- Utilize cooperative arrangements and contractual agreements when developing new programs or institutions to maximize the use of existing facilities such as in the “mortarless” approach planned for Lafayette.
- Preserve and maximize vocational and technical training opportunities.
- Provide statewide, open-admissions access to a full range of sub-baccalaureate education opportunities.
- Require the following before creation of any new programs or institutions:
  - Full documentation of need and objectives.
  - Cost projections.
  - Determination of funding sources.
  - Identification of impacts on existing programs.
- Ensure that any new programs or institutions which impinge on a four-year institution’s enrollment and funding will provide better quality service at a lower cost. Any shifting of responsibility from a four-year institution to a two-year institution should be done gradually and without “hold-harmless” arrangements designed to protect the existing level of funding regardless of enrollment.
- Maximize articulation among and between various types of educational institutions to ensure easy transfer of course credit.
- Subject all education programs, particularly in occupational education, to rigorous accountability to assure that job requirements and student demands are being met.
- Use new technologies such as distance learning to their fullest.
- Institute formula- and performance-based funding to ensure equity and cost-effectiveness.
- Allow maximum flexibility to permit rapid adjustment of program offerings to meet changing demands.
- Maintain appropriate accreditation for all programs.
- Avoid duplication of effort among institutions in a given area.
- Offer students the widest possible choice of educational options within the system.
- Provide for community input into the development of programs for each area.

"The state cannot afford to follow a ‘build it and they will come’ approach to creating new community colleges."

RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM FOR LOUISIANA

PAR offers the following basic design for a community college system to meet the criteria stated above.

- Create under the Board of Regents a separate management board with responsibility for the community colleges, technical colleges and adult basic education programs.

A new board is needed to manage a dual system of community and technical colleges. Even if no new colleges were created, a board is required to oversee and coordinate the existing two-year academic colleges and technical colleges.

The two-year academic colleges should remain part of the higher education community and under the management umbrella of the Board of Regents. This is necessary to assure that coursework will transfer between these programs and the four-year schools.

Placing the two-year academic colleges and the technical colleges under the same management board would help assure that efforts are not duplicated, that articulation between the technical and academic programs is maximized and that cooperative arrangements are devised to make optimum use of the existing facilities.
• Include all existing and planned two-year colleges.

The new statewide system should be inclusive. There is some resistance to moving the two-year colleges now under the LSU and Southern systems. However, these three colleges are well situated to serve their areas of the state.

• Move the entire technical college system from BESE to the new board.

PAR analyses of the vo-tech system in 1978 and 1981 cited problems with the governance, administrative structure, information system, budgeting process, financing, program evaluation, proliferation of schools and inconsistent school policies.

Many of these problems continue. At present, the school directors owe their positions to BESE and are, in practice, largely independent of the State Department of Education (SDE). The SDE still often appears unable or unwilling to encroach on the directors’ turf. The present structure simply does not lend itself to an efficient, coordinated system of sub-baccalaureate education.

The technical colleges must not become a stepchild of the academically oriented Board of Regents. Having a prominent position within a new management board should help to assure this does not happen. At the same time, placing the technical colleges under the new board would facilitate articulation and cooperative uses of their extensive facilities.

• Maintain academic accreditation of the community colleges under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and accreditation of the technical colleges under the Council on Occupational Education.

Maintaining separate accreditation for the academic and technical colleges would ensure that the technical schools retain the hands-on, craftsman/instructor flavor of their programs. This will cause less disruption in these schools and permit them to forego costly upgrades to meet academic standards. In the future, some schools might be merged into comprehensive community colleges under SACS accreditation. However, any such developments should be accomplished gradually.

• Require the new board to designate a minimum of eight regional service areas within the state and design an educational services plan for each.

In designating regional service areas the board should take into account the areas being designated by the Workforce Development Commission. The state's eight existing regional planning and economic development districts are a logical starting point. Depending on the location of existing facilities, it may be useful to split a region to provide effective service areas. Regional plans should document training needs, determine any gaps in existing services and take into account all existing facilities in devising ways to meet the needs.

The “mortarless” concept should be used to establish a community college in each region which does not have an existing two-year academic college. Plans for developing academic programs in areas currently served by open admissions universities should be developed in concert with the affected universities.

• Require the Board of Regents to develop an equitable funding formula for the community and technical colleges.

No headway has been made toward a rational method of funding the technical colleges. At present, each school is a separate budget unit and can lobby its BESE district member and local legislators for support.

Initially, the formula should be based on FTEs or credit hours but sensitive to the varying costs of different programs. Performance criteria should be added to the formula once they have been developed and adequately validated.

In addition to the formula, a separate funding mechanism is required to allow the system to respond quickly to special industry training needs.

• Require the creation of regional and campus level advisory boards.

Because each region of the state differs in its needs and in the availability of facilities, a regional advisory body is needed to assist in the development of policy and to help work out the cooperative arrangements that will make the new system work effectively. Advisory boards are needed at the campus and craft level as well. These boards should function purely in an advisory—as opposed to a management—capacity.

• Require the Board of Regents to develop an articulation plan to assure the maximum opportunity to transfer credit among all post-secondary institutions.
The Board of Regents has already begun to develop an articulation plan. It must take into account the special requirements of a new community and technical college system. Particular care must be taken to assure that transfer credit be given for comparable courses at the technical colleges.

- Give the Board of Regents sole authority to recommend new institutions or programs. The Legislature’s role should be limited to approving or denying Regents’ recommendations.

The reckless, unplanned legislative authorization of new colleges and campuses evident in the recent session cannot continue. If an educationally sound, fiscally responsible system of post-secondary education is to be developed, Regents should have primary responsibility for deciding the type and location of new facilities. Legislative “horse trading” is not a basis for developing a rational system. The Legislature’s proper role should be limited to vetoing suggestions or denying funds.

The community colleges authorized in the 1997 legislative session in the absence of a positive recommendation from the Board of Regents should not be funded.

- Require the community and technical college board to cooperate with the Workforce Development Commission in building accountability into the new system for meeting training needs for job openings.

The community and technical college board should use the planned new manpower information system in making service and program decisions. The new board should also designate a staff official responsible for oversight and coordination of industry training programs such as quickstart and other customized special skills training.

- Make the proposed new system responsible for the state’s Adult Basic Education, literacy and GED programs.

The new system should have primary responsibility for administering adult education and training programs currently operated under BESE and other state agencies. The system should work together with the new Workforce Development Commission to assure that adults have access to quality basic education programs.

Providing basic education under the auspices of the new board would allow students a natural transition into occupational training.

- Place a moratorium on building any new post-secondary campuses.

With the exception of the planned Baton Rouge Community College facility, no new college facilities should be built until the proposed new community and technical college board and the Board of Regents have documented a need for services in an area and demonstrated that that need cannot be served using existing facilities through cooperative arrangements. Public facilities should be catalogued and a capacity/use analysis conducted in each area where expanded community college services are being considered.

The Board of Regents must take a strong leadership role and resist the temptation to acquiesce to legislators’ desires to have new institutions in their districts. Doing true feasibility studies would be a step in that direction rather than some that have been submitted in the past.

- Strengthen the Board of Regents’ oversight role in coordinating all post-secondary education.

With three management boards and a proposed fourth, it is essential that a proper balance among the various interests be maintained. The Board of Regents must exercise its authority in the areas of planning, performance assessment, budgeting and funding formula development, educational program coordination and articulation. If the recent statutory effort to strengthen the board’s powers proves ineffective, a stronger constitutional authorization may be needed.

CONCLUSION

Louisiana has an extensive array of post-secondary education institutions and services although many of them have been underfunded compared to other states. Any further developments should be carefully planned and designed to meet real priority needs of Louisiana citizens and to make optimum use of existing institutions. The state cannot afford to follow a “build it and they will come” approach to creating new community colleges.

A new system is needed to coordinate existing subbaccalaureate programs and institutions. It is essential to provide the systematic statewide planning that must precede any further expansion. A community and technical college system could play a pivotal role in the state's workforce development efforts.

Primary author of this report is Ty Keller