

3 boards' merger opposed

PAR, CABL argue Regents needed for management

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Two nonprofit governmental interest groups in Louisiana are opposing a controversial recommendation to consolidate the state higher education management boards.

The biggest objection in the complaint is that the Louisiana Postsecondary Education Review Commission recommendation could abolish the Louisiana Board of Regents, which is the state's higher education coordinating and policymaking body.

Both the governmental research group Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana and the governmental lobbying body Council for a Better Louisiana have issued new reports opposing shuttering the Regents.

The commission, which finalized its work early this month, recommended consolidating the LSU, Southern University and University of Louisiana system's management boards with the Regents into a single oversight and management board for universities.

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System Board of Supervisors would remain intact as a second management body.

Doing so would require a constitutional amendment and two-thirds legislative support.

According to Thursday's PAR report, "The (commission's) recommendation to merge boards would eliminate the only state entity dedicated to developing an overarching, coordinated approach to the delivery of higher education."

The result would "concentrate power in the governor's office as the default policymaking body for higher education" and "pit the two resulting management boards directly against each other in the annual struggle for funding," the report states.

PAR argues that the Board of Regents is needed as a coordinating body for whatever management boards end up existing.

Neither PAR nor CABL are openly supporting or opposing any particular kind of consolidation apart from advising against abolishing the Regents.

In a commentary issued last week, CABL questioned how a single university board can manage and coordinate 14 universities, two law schools, two agricultural centers, two medical schools, various research centers and the state's public hospital system, which is currently part of the LSU System.