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N E W S R E L E A S E

La. Workforce Commission, University of La. at Lafayette Partner to Improve Occupational Forecasting, Better Match Workforce Supply and Demand

Partnership also to focus on workforce training programs, performance measures

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) has contracted with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s Research Consortium to develop a method and the tools for providing enhanced information on workforce demand and projected supply to help build and manage a more responsive workforce delivery system.

The project is designed to integrate existing LWC data on industry and occupational employment projections with the consortium's data on Louisiana’s population, education, poverty and other levels from birth into adulthood. This combination of data will show how closely the state’s workforce demand matches its supply. It also will identify where gaps exist and support policy and program changes to address these gaps.

“Our partnership with UL Lafayette will enable us to take the workforce data we already gather and use it in a way we never have before to improve occupational forecasting,” LWC Executive Director Tim Barfield said. “This means job seekers will have better information on work opportunities in the near term and in the future, training providers will be able to continually realign to produce more graduates with marketable skills and businesses will have a better labor pool to draw from.”

The UL Lafayette consortium comprises the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, the Center for Business and Information Technologies (CBIT) and the B.I. Moody III College of Business Administration (COBA).

During the three-year partnership, the LWC and the UL consortium will work on several projects. A simulation tool will be developed by CBIT and COBA using the Picard Center’s longitudinal population databases and LWC data to analyze the gaps between Louisiana’s workforce demand and projected supply of workers by skill, industry and region. In addition, the tool will have the capacity to answer “what if” questions for policy formulation and analysis.

The Picard Center will develop an annual statewide forecasting conference, with the first one slated for this summer. This conference will give participants the opportunity to react to the regional business sector data, receive information from nationally recognized experts in workforce and economic development, and provide input into the overall occupational forecast.

“Managing and identifying the needs in the state’s workforce is a priority for everyone, especially during these tough economic times,” said UL Lafayette President Dr. Joseph Savoie. “We have research centers here on campus with the tools and data necessary to help meet the needs of Louisiana businesses and employees and joining forces with the Louisiana Workforce Commission seemed like a perfect fit.”

In addition to its work on occupational forecasting, a research committee comprising selected staff from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s research consortium, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, members of the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council and representatives of business, education and other colleges and universities will be established. This committee will establish a research agenda focused on identifying the impediments to the growth of scientific investigation in the field of workforce development and suggest strategies for improving the quality and quantity of the available workforce in Louisiana.

As part of this work, the UL Lafayette Research Consortium will evaluate every aspect of training conducted through the LWC and offer recommendations on measuring performance outcomes.

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