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March 30, 2015

Approved by the Joint Legislative
Committee on the Budget

DATE: 5-20-15 *AB*

Representative James R. Fannin
Chairman, Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget
320 6th Street
Jonesboro, LA 71251

RE: Southern University and A&M College- Modification of GRAD Act Targets

Dear Honorable Representative Fannin:

The Southern University and A&M College is submitting this letter to request that you place on the Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget's agenda for consideration, the request for final approval to modify GRAD Act targets for years 5 and 6. According to the GRAD Act agreement, the Louisiana Board of Regents may modify the established targets in an institution's performance agreement in the event extraordinary circumstances prevent the institution from meeting the established targets with final approval from the Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget. Southern University and A&M College has struggled over the last five years with extraordinary circumstances that have adversely impacted student progression and enrollment and have prevented the University from meeting established student success GRAD Act targets for year four. The Louisiana Board of Regents met on February 23, 2015 and unanimously voted to allow Southern University to modify the targets that were set in 2010 due to the *impact of financial exigency and changes in federal aid guidelines* that negatively impacted the University's quest to reach the established GRAD Act targets

The Southern University and A&M College structure, under which the targets and benchmarks were negotiated in 2010, no longer exists. The impact of the financial exigency filed in 2011 has been particularly harsh on retention and graduation rates, where cuts to faculty and staff positions resulted in a significant decline in course offerings for students, fewer faculty and staff advisors, and the elimination of academic programs. Changes to the Federal Aid guidelines created financial hurdles for the majority of our students who are low-income, first generation, and minority students that depend upon federal assistance to remain in school and advance towards degree completion.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70813-0400 [225] 771-2011

"A People's Institution Serving The State, The Nation, and The World."

The GRAD Act targets that were set in 2010-2011, were set at a time when SUBR's enrollment was higher and financial allocations were adequate. No one anticipated the turbulent times that the University endured over the past four years. The impacts on enrollment, retention and graduation rates resulting from the *declaration of financial exigency* and *changes in federal aid guidelines* have posed the largest challenges to the institution which primarily serve minority students from low income backgrounds. The GRAD Act as designed was never fully implemented due to these extenuating circumstances.

Modification of the request to modify targets is subject to the approval of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget. We humbly urge you to submit this request to the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget requesting to modify targets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Flandus McClinton, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Flandus McClinton, Jr.
Acting Chancellor