



# Louisiana EPSCoR

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH

## EPSCoR: Not Just Another Acronym

You read about it in our newsletter. You might see its name in the newspaper or hear about it from colleagues. But do you really know what EPSCoR is all about? What it has meant, and continues to mean, to Louisiana?

EPSCoR has, in fact, meant a great deal to Louisiana. Louisiana EPSCoR was, for example, instrumental in bringing over \$222 million in federal grants to Louisiana as of October 2007.

It has benefited literally all of the State's universities in terms of improved research infrastructure and opportunities for their science and engineering research faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and postdoctoral associates.

It was an early leader in the drive for state-wide collaborative research among universities. It even helped lay the groundwork for the Board of Regents Support Fund.

### IN THE BEGINNING

EPSCoR—the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research—was established in 1978 by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in response to Congressional concerns that a few states were receiving an overwhelming percentage of federal research and development funding. A merit-based program, NSF EPSCoR uses experts to review funding applications from states.

In 1987, when Louisiana joined EPSCoR, five states were receiving 50 percent of all federal R&D funding. The total for the 18 states that then belonged to EPSCoR, including Louisiana, was less than five percent.

Why were those five top states doing so well? NSF studies concluded that successful scientists require specific resources to be productive: excellent laborato-

ries, cutting edge equipment, outstanding graduate students to support their research, successful colleagues with whom to collaborate, and time to carry out their work. Scientists in the top five states had those resources; EPSCoR states, much less so.

How did the top states pay for these resources? Studies disclosed that federal grants supported their equipment, their graduate students, and their laboratories.

"The objective of Louisiana EPSCoR, the very reason for its existence, was and is alleviation of those barriers hindering the ability of the State's science and engineering researchers to compete for federal funding and impeding Louisiana's economic development possibilities," says Dr. Michael Khonsari, LA EPSCoR Project Director.

Pointing out that federal research funding awarded to Louisiana increased from \$156,652,000 in 1999 to \$259,895,000 in 2005, he adds that "while Louisiana EPSCoR can't take all of the credit for that substantial increase, it has played a creditable role in helping the State get the required research infrastructure in place."

### LA EDUCATION QUALITY TRUST FUND

EPSCoR admission requires more than the program's eligibility level, which is based on the amount of a state's federal research funding. It must also demonstrate a commitment to developing its research base, and improving its science and technology research and education programs.

"When Louisiana first applied for membership, it was eligible in terms of its funding levels, but judged ineligible in terms of commitment," says Dr. Les Guice, LA EPSCoR Chair and Louisiana Tech University's Vice President for Research and Development.

Creation of the Louisiana Education Quality Trust Fund (LEQTF) and its Louisiana Education Quality Support Fund (LEQSF) opened the door for Louisiana's 1987 acceptance into EPSCoR.

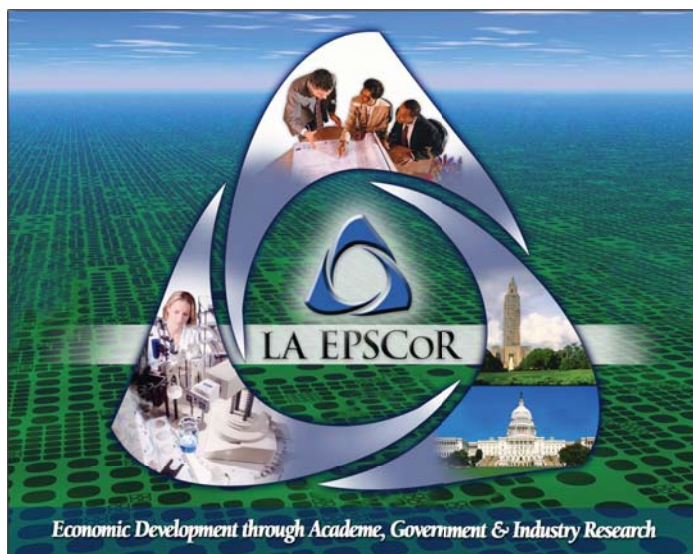
In September 1986, with overwhelming voter support, the Louisiana Constitution placed the bulk of proceeds from a settlement between the State and federal government over offshore oil and gas revenues into a permanent trust fund for education—LEQTF, often referred to as the 8g Fund.

The first EPSCoR Committee, then titled the Louisiana Stimulus for Excellence in Research Committee, had been appointed by the Board of Regents (BoR) in 1985. Its charge was to plan and implement a program to improve Louisiana's status for federal research funding.

"At the Regents' request, the EPSCoR Committee, using NSF standards as the model, developed the 1988 Strategic Plan and Evaluation System for higher education's portion of the trust

EPSCoR

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Louisiana EPSCoR: Catalyst for Statewide Collaboration

## Louisiana EPSCoR Funds Received 1987-Oct 2007

Agency	Federal	BoRSF
NSF	\$104,229,418	\$21,142,036
NASA	8,745,236	7,811,560
NIH	90,856,739	—
DOE	8,551,388	6,639,590
DoD	8,737,013	2,639,949
EPA	1,023,649	994,542
DOC	250,000	300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$222,393,443</b>	<b>\$39,527,677</b>

### EPSCoR

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fund," says Dr. Guice.

Interest earnings from trust fund monies available to higher education are annually appropriated by the Legislature to LEQSF, also known as the Board of Regents Support Fund (BoRSF).

As of October 2007, the BoRSF had allocated over \$39.5 million for matching funds required by some federal agency EPSCoR research grants.

"The Board of Regents Support Fund and Louisiana EPSCoR have proven a winning combination," notes Commissioner of Higher Education E. Joseph Savoie.

"Just as the Support Fund was responsible for opening the doors of membership to the NSF EPSCoR Program, so has Louisiana EPSCoR opened new doors of opportunity and federal funding for our university science and engineering researchers.

"The return on our EPSCoR investments has played a pivotal role in helping propel Louisiana toward our goal of a knowledge-based economy positioned to compete in the national and global economy."

Louisiana EPSCoR has been awarded grants from other federal agencies that followed NSF's lead and formed EPSCoR or EPSCoR-like programs: Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Institutes of Health.

#### STATEWIDE COLLABORATION CATALYST

"Prior to 1986, Louisiana universities competed over an ever decreasing pie, rather than trying to increase the size of the pie," says Dr. Khonsari, the BoR Associate Commissioner for Sponsored

## Louisiana EPSCoR Committee

### Voting Members:

**Louisiana Tech University**  
Dr. Les Guice, Chair  
**Louisiana State University and A&M College**  
Dr. Brooks Keel, Vice Chair  
**Louisiana Board of Regents**  
Dr. Kerry Davidson  
**LSU Agricultural Center**  
Dr. Robert Godke  
**LSU Health Sciences Center - New Orleans**  
Dr. Hilary Thompson  
**LSU Health Sciences Center - Shreveport**  
Dr. Sandra Roerig  
**Pennington Biomedical Research Center**  
Dr. Jeffrey Keller  
**Southern University and A&M College**  
Dr. Diola Bagayoko  
**Tulane University**  
Dr. Nicholas Altiero  
**Tulane University Health Sciences Center**  
Dr. Laura Levy  
**Xavier University of Louisiana**  
Dr. Gene D'Amour

### University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Dr. Carl Frantz  
**University of New Orleans**  
Dr. Robert Cashner  
**Business and Industry Rep.**  
Ms. Connie P. Fabré  
**Governor's Economic Development Rep.**  
Mr. Robert Fudickar

### Ex-Officio members:

**National Science Foundation**  
Dr. Michael Khonsari  
NSF EPSCoR Project Director  
**Department of Defense EPSCoR**  
Dr. Scott Whittenburg  
University of New Orleans  
**Department of Defense EPSCoR**  
Dr. Henry Chu  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
**NASA EPSCoR**  
Dr. John Wefel  
Louisiana State University and A&M College  
**National Institutes of Health IDeA**  
Dr. Kenneth Kratz  
LSU Health Sciences Center - New Orleans

Programs Research and Development. "Louisiana EPSCoR has served as a catalyst for changing Louisiana's research culture by promoting multi-institutional collaborations.

"We leverage State government investments by identifying the research strengths of our universities to determine collaborations that best meet the goals and objectives of the EPSCoR federal programs and will enhance the State's economy."

Citing *CyberTools*, a collaboration of nine universities awarded an NSF Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) grant, as an example of the program's success, Dr. Guice says:

"This three-year, \$9M grant is enabling

a team of researchers to capitalize on Louisiana's recent investments in cyber-infrastructure.

"They are developing the new cyber tools for high-performance computing, advanced networking and data management capabilities in tandem with the project's science drivers: biology, materials science and computational sciences."

He adds that the researchers are building on the accomplishments of two previous multi-institutional research teams, each of which was also awarded a \$9 million NSF RII grant.

LA EPSCoR's collaborative efforts have also reached out beyond the State's borders. It is spearheading an alliance of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi research universities in the pursuit of a collaborative science and engineering agenda to propel the Gulf Coast region to competitiveness and world leadership.

Additionally, it played a key role in the creation of the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative, which led to LONI's selection as one of the NSF TeraGrid's 11 partners.

"NSF EPSCoR's goal is to maximize and grow the potential inherent in a state's science and technology resources and to encourage the use of those resources as a foundation for economic growth," concludes Dr. Khonsari.

"That is exactly what LA EPSCoR has done and will continue to do."

### Louisiana EPSCoR Staff

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