Deseg plan

Education ‘mix’ master advises single board

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A new plan to integrate higher education in Louisiana still has to pass muster with a federal court, but the final say could come from students who will vote by their choice of university.

Larry Crain, president of the board overseeing regional colleges, said Wednesday that a good governing board will be able to overcome that obstacle.

“It all depends on how the new board approaches this. If they follow what’s been laid out here it can happen. The state is going to have to take this very seriously to bring about integration,” Crain said.

On Tuesday, a special master appointed by three federal judges to draw up a desegregation plan for Louisiana colleges submitted his final proposal for approval.

The plan calls for one powerful board to oversee higher education instead of the four existing now, restricting admission standards to better handle unprepared students, establishing a community college system and providing more money to predominantly black universities to develop programs more attractive to white students.

For the time being, the greatest fears of Louisiana’s college presidents appear put to rest. Special master Paul Verkuil, president of William and Mary College in Virginia, did not recommend closing or merging any schools.

Representatives of the state’s two mostly black universities, Southern University and Grambling State University, also got some of the items they wanted — disproportionately high black representation on the new board and enhancement money for their schools.

Thomas Todd of Chicago, the attorney representing Grambling, said he could not comment on the plan until he received a copy of it.

“I have not seen it. I’ve just heard comments,” he said. “It seems as if Mr. Kennedy and the governor got an advance copy. Maybe they helped to write it.”

Sen. William Jefferson, a New Orleans attorney who represents Southern, said he had not received a copy of the plan either.

“I do know the single board has nothing to do with desegregation, by the governor and confirmed by the Senate.

The plan would also restrict for the first-time admissions at some universities. Now, any graduate of a Louisiana high school can attend a state college.

Jack Andonie, chairman of the LSU Board of Supervisors, said a community college system with open admissions and four-year doctoral institutions with selective admissions could advance integration.

“If they’re not happy, they’re simply not going to go the schools involved,” Andonie said.

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and it seems to be the centerpiece of this plan,” Jefferson said.

Louisiana has four boards that govern 17 state universities with 145,000 students. Separate boards oversee the mostly black Southern University System and the mostly white Louisiana State University System.

The Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities governs smaller, regional schools. All three systems are under the thumb of a Board of Regents.

Under Verkuil’s plan, the four boards would be scrapped in favor of a new 17-member board appointed...