

# LSU Health N.O. offers fast-track option

State makes effort to curb 'brain drain'

**BY EMILY WOODRUFF**

Staff writer

LSU Health New Orleans is offering a fast-track admissions option for those interested in a public health career. Starting next year, any potential student who is a Louisiana resident or has an undergraduate degree from a Louisiana institution with at least a 3.0 GPA will receive a guaranteed spot in the master's of public health program.

The initiative is called the Louisiana 3.0+ Scholars Pledge. The goal is to keep Louisiana's "best and brightest" in town for school and beyond, said Kari Brisolaro, professor of environmental health, climate and sustainability at the LSU Health Sciences Center.

"We're trying to help build up the health care workforce in the state ... but with a focus on serving the population of Louisiana," said Brisolaro.

Those with a master's degree in public health work in a variety of fields, including for nonprofits, all levels of government and pharmaceutical companies.

Louisiana is among the states with the most severe losses of highly educated residents, often called the "brain drain." In 2023, the state saw 62% more college-educated residents leave than move in, according to a report that used data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Only South Dakota and Mississippi saw higher losses.

Another 2019 U.S. Congress report also found that Louisiana ranks high for educated people leaving the state, and they aren't being replaced by people from other states. Texas, Florida, Georgia, Virginia and California are among the top destinations for Louisiana's educated residents.

The loss of an educated workforce makes recruiting for in-demand health care jobs such as doctors and nurses more difficult. Louisiana ranks poorly for most health metrics, with high rates of chronic disease and a lower-than-average life expectancy. That makes the state prime training ground for people who want to understand those issues.

"We have no shortage of public health issues to deal with," said Brisolaro. "It's really the front

# HEALTH

Continued from page 1B

lines."

During the early years of the pandemic, applications to LSU's master's of public health program surged 257% compared to 2019. But in 2023 and 2024, interest began to wind down. Currently the program has 93 students.

Part of LSU's mission also is to help find jobs in the state for public health students after they graduate. The most recent class of graduates has an employment rate over 90%, Brisolara said.

Potential students will still have to fill out an application for the program, but they'll get automatic admission if they meet the GPA and undergraduate institution requirements.

*Email Emily Woodruff at [ewoodruff@theadvocate.com](mailto:ewoodruff@theadvocate.com).*