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Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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LSU FACULTY SENATE

Monthly Newsletter

February 29, 2012



President's Message

Nearly two months have slipped away since LSU completed a football season that produced an astonishing record of victories: a record that, even without a national championship as garnish, must surely count as a super-size main course in the meatiest of sports. Remarkably, what lingers from the past season is not the sweet aroma of victory but rather something of a bad taste. Football, like most sports, allegorizes the institutions that sponsor it. Identifying the reason that one of the greatest seasons in sports history is creating only a paucity of post-season joy is a good way to figure out what might be going wrong with Louisiana higher education.

As is evidenced by the fervor with which adoring fans have defended the late Joe Paterno, a scuffle or scandal here or there seldom sours an audience. History will eventually show whether "Joe Pa" was a good or bad man. What his story now teaches us is that a charismatic figure with a bit of cultural savvy (and academic schmaltz) can stir up hope, enthusiasm, and support even when knocked to the deck. When we look at the leadership of the LSU football program, on the other hand, we find little in the way of vision, solidarity with the home institution, or even plain old warmth. Whether or not the leaders of the gridiron gang develop wise strategies, the strange introversion that contrasts with LSU's sports success seems to undo any good will that an undoubted record of achievement produces.

The shortfall of sympathy and gregariousness among the pigskin princes analogizes the character of not only LSU but of most Louisiana institutions of higher education. Over the last several decades, Louisiana's schools have metamorphosed from isolated encampments to major urban institutions. By and large, campus administrations—which, like football teams, come under opposing pressure from both down-home culture and from national aspirations—have not been able to keep pace with the maturation of colleges and universities. Campuses all over Louisiana have developed complex, multi-constituency operating environments characterized by vigorous dialogue, something new and still threatening in easygoing Louisiana. Under pressure from target-seeking legislators who look for and attack failure, hobbled by small legislative and lobbying support, campus administrations tend to play it safe, turn inward, and avoid public disagreement in even its most mild forms. Collectively, Louisiana higher education suffers from what might be called "glass-jaw syndrome." Political circumstances allow the delivery of only minimal punches while even mild blows raise fears of terrible consequences. Higher education management thus plays a two-quarterback system with only one quarterback. It must develop robust faculties, programs, and research records but yet it remains nervous about experimentation. In such an environment, even the support coalitions that do good work for the campuses develop a high degree of uniformity and conformity as well as caution, as if every player on the team were a defensive lineman.

Louisiana's universities need to come to grips with the public culture and the tradition of vigorous debate that made western universities the greatest in the world. Before we start talking about flagships or about restructuring or about anything at all, we need to create the social and cultural foundations of institutional greatness. Reducing the flow of diverse ideas also allows the governor and the legislature to set one campus against another—the equivalent of building an entire season on in-state rivalries and rent-a-win teams—thereby discouraging statewide solutions. Structural changes—a new offense—are needed, but not in the form of shuffling campuses from one system to another or kicking up turf wars. What is needed is a new species of administrator who is skilled in inter-campus exchanges and adept at faculty relations. We need a few folks who can call the big play, who can go deep and otherwise take risks safe in the knowledge that even when failure is probable, the people and even the opposition will applaud courage more than cowering and will *always* give their support to those who try.

Jindal-Sponsored Legislation Imposes Heavier Burden on Retirees While Raising Retirement Age and Reducing Benefits

Mortarboards went whirling when the governor announced his latest plans for the reform of retirement programs in Louisiana, which, far from liberating academic employees and universities from the payment of tribute into the notorious unfunded accrued liability, would increase the degree of centralization and the level of taxation demanded by an allegedly "conservative" regime. Included among the Jindal proposals, expressed in HB53 along with circa ninety other bills, are a three percent increase in employees contributions (also known as a "tax" except when imposed by a neo-conservative administration, in which case the term "fair share" is substituted); a delay in retirement age to sixty-seven; reduction or elimination of cost of living adjustments; and a complex scaling down of benefits via assorted adjustments in retirement benefits and procedures for those under the age of fifty-five. Unintended consequences would include a gigantic number of retirements among state employees between the end of the legislative session and June 30th as affected employees retire before deadlines pass. However cynical the retirement reform undertaking might be, the situation "on the ground" is only about half as severe as it might be owing to the heavy participation by academic employees in the beleaguered Optional Retirement Plan ("ORP"), which is not affected by this legislation. The LSU System campuses offer a case in point. Of the 25,000 employees, approximately 13,000 are exempt from these new charges and restrictions owing to age, to participation in the ORP, or to participation in other programs. Some types of campuses are affected more than others, with the lion's share of affected employees abiding in the hospitals and medical facilities. None of this is to say that the situation is a good one or that the retirement problem is solved, for the problems with the ORP and the unfunded liability continue. *Newsletter* readers should also take heart in the establishment of a new working group on the retirement problem which is enjoying some behind-the-scenes success in negotiating with decision-makers (more on that in later issues of this publication).

Regents, Rockefeller Moving on College Readiness

Probably the number-one problem in Louisiana is that of maintaining a steady stream of college-ready students who can be retained without grading standards deteriorating and who require no remedial education. In a promising move, the Board of Regents, in collaboration with PARCC (the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), has received and is in the process of deploying a three-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in the sum of \$200,000.00 per year for the purpose of developing a "core to college" program that would ensure that students arrive at college equipped with basic skills (such as mathematics and English) as well as in a state of overall college readiness. As is often the case with Regents projects, the deployment procedures run on for many pages and invoke a bewildering range of acronyms, but the overall goal and purpose seems sound. Additionally, the Regents will allocate \$3,500.00 to each participating university for "CITAL" (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning) funds in order to provide university faculty with professional development pertaining to the Common Core State Standards and new Louisiana Department of Education evaluation tools for teachers and leaders (COMPASS) (only the Regents could deploy two new acronyms in a single paragraph). We have high hopes for a program that may increase in focus as it develops.

Regents Ask Higher Ed Administrators for Cost Analysis of Projected Reduction in Applicants to State Universities

No one could ever accuse the Board of Regents of doing anything in a loudly public way. So it is that this temple of discretion has quietly directed university system heads to develop "admission criteria transition plans" by midsummer. It being an axiom among connoisseurs that quality and quantity are inversely related, the wits atop the Claiborne Building have deduced that the increasing admissions requirements for Louisiana universities may reduce the number of applicants headed for our kudzu-covered halls. System chiefs have asked their chancellors to assess the possible economic and, with that, curricular impact of what Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell, in a directive dated February 1st, denominated "the new normal." It appears that the Board of Regents will not only receive but will adjust—meddle with—the plans, or, as the letter says, "aggregate the various approaches" (never underestimate the power of the princes of the profession to produce mixed metaphors worthy of a John Donne or a George Herbert). Some of the areas that system heads and their chancellors have been directed to address include mergers of programs, degree eliminations, employee/position reductions, faculty recruitment with limited compensation options, and "impact of inflation on base level core support." The development of these "transition plans" is obviously a matter that will require close monitoring as faculty are again called on to do the impossible: produce more degrees with fewer students and little support.

ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Brian Nichols, Interim CIO

LSU may be forever, but the people who keep the cogs of its hallowed halls running smoothly are not. A fact of university life is that students graduate, researchers land jobs at other institutions or in the private sector. The same holds true for LSU's administrative staff. Of course, universities don't shut down when a key person leaves for other pastures. Rather, existing personnel are frequently asked to take on additional duties while the university conducts a national search for a replacement. Brian Nichols, interim Chief Information Officer, is such a person. Nichols, who normally serves as Executive Director of Administrative Services and Risk Management, began overseeing ITS on top of his regular job when Brian Voss left to head up the IT department at the University of Maryland.



Nichols' job as interim CIO is hardly a walk in the park. IT administers the entire LSU network and runs the back end of all of the university's mission critical systems, including payroll, Human Resources, and Student Financial Aid. In addition, Nichols oversees the support role ITS plays for computer labs on campus and for faculty, staff, and students. On top of this, ITS works in close concert with the Center for Computing and Technology (CCT) and manages LOUIS and its sister system LONI (Louisiana Optical Network Initiative), each of which provides researchers at Louisiana's universities statewide access to digital materials.

Despite the daunting tasks that all of these duties present him, Nichols has not shirked from his responsibilities as interim CIO. Far from it. "This is a great opportunity to help LSU, to serve the

university," he says quite simply. Nor has Nichols contented himself to merely keeping ITS functioning at a high level during his tenure. Rather, like any good leader, he has sought opportunities to expand and upgrade the university's computer systems as the need arises. Nichols is overseeing the migration of the university's email servers from the data center to the cloud. In addition, he is assisting with the purchase of a new supercomputer that will replace the now aging Tezpur.

Part of Nichols confidence in his position as interim CIO may stem from his days as a student worker in LSU's ITS department in the 1990s, a job he continued full time upon graduation. In addition to a Bachelor's of Science in Microbiology, Nichols also holds a Masters in Management Information Systems with a concentration in Internal Audit. Nichols sees a strong connection between the education he received at LSU and the skills that are necessary to perform well in his current positions as CIO and Executive Director of Administrative Services and Risk Management. "It really gave me a chance to work with lots of people in management in Higher Ed," Nichols observes.

Like many of LSU's administrators, Nichols is fiercely loyal to the university, its traditions, and its people. "I believe in the purple and gold," he says. Nichols is also aware of the challenges that the Flagship university faces in a state that is sometimes better known for the Saints and the tourist culture that has grown up in the French Quarter: "there's just so much more to Louisiana than that," he says fervently. Such a perception can add to the difficulties any university sometimes has in recruiting new researchers and administrators and retaining them when presented with opportunities elsewhere. Yet Nichols remains optimistic about the value that LSU provides to the state as well as the part that each member of the community plays in making LSU a great university: "We have an opportunity as an institution to continue to be a leader in everything that we do, be it the academic side or the administrative side All of it."

"We have an opportunity as an institution to continue to be a leader in everything that we do, be it the academic side or the administrative side."

UL Intellectual Property Policy Proposed Without Faculty Input

T. S. Eliot opined that April is the cruelest month, but February 2012 was surely a non-Valentine event for those researchers in the University of Louisiana System who create intellectual property. Launching first at McNeese State University but then gaining momentum statewide, the draft policy, which can be viewed [online](#), seems to authorize University of Louisiana campus officials to intrude as co-signatories on any and all "IP" contracts and to grab up to a sixty percent of book royalties, inventions, or anything else that professors might devise. Unprecedented in higher-education history, the draft policy would give the cash-strapped University of Louisiana System the right to approve any and all publishing contracts and to confiscate royalties earned on books used in an author's classroom. Even more remarkable was the attempt to implement this policy through campus committees with no or minimal faculty involvement, committees that included only a mix of administrators



For authors and innovators, \$1.00 = forty cents in the University of Louisiana System

and auxiliary operators such as bookstore managers. The normally introverted University of Louisiana System was taken by surprise when the story went viral, emerging as headline news on *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. University of Louisiana System Brad O'Hara scrambled to link the draft policy with allegedly similar policies in other higher education systems such as that of Louisiana State University, but O'Hara cited no particulars (those particulars have also eluded the eyes of Newsletter editors). Fortunately, the "IP" policy eruption may be headed into a dormant phase. One campus is already declaring that policy interpretation and implementation procedures be developed by an "appropriate committee" and that the University of Louisiana System policy gives the campus President authority over "stewardship" of intellectual property. "To steward" not meaning the same as "to seize," professors may be cautiously hopeful that the University of Louisiana System is in the process of backing away from a policy that would put the damper on the intellectual productivity that it ought to be encouraging.

ASH Committee Making Headway on Bevy of Issues

The LSU campus Admissions, Standards, and Honors Committee, colloquially known as "ASH," has been on a productivity binge. Following up on a suggestion from retention czarina Sandra McGuire, ASH has endorsed a new policy regarding readmission standards for re-entering students. In response to a request from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, ASH has been researching assorted questions relating to the scheduling and economics of intersession classes and expects to file a report soon. ASH has decided that the "repeat-delete" policy might be a good idea but is also investigating questions pertaining to the implementation of such a policy. The dual enrollment initiative, a program intended to smooth the route from the best high schools into college, has emerged as a larger challenge than anticipated but is also eliciting a favorable response from ASH committee members pending analysis of the mechanics of such a program. Following up on a resolution now being considered in the LSU Faculty Senate, ASH has indicated initial favorable disposition toward a "plus-minus" grading system but is also probing alternatives (such as the University of Wisconsin grading system, which deploys intermediate grades such as "AB" or "BC"). Finally, ASH has created a new online mechanism for the submission of proposals that will soon debut on the new ASH website. One could not ask for more from any committee!

Vice-Provost Reeve Tapped to Serve on E-Learning Task Force

The transfer of UNO to the University of Louisiana System has resulted in some reassignments and new appointments for the various committees and task forces that operate in and through the Board of Regents. The latest adjustment involves the appointment of LSU Vice-Provost Gil Reeve to the E-Learning Task Force, an entity in the Regents' office that monitors and promotes online education and that eventually may enjoy a higher profile than it presently receives. Reeve, whose expertise in matters related to accreditation cannot be doubted, should be a strong advocate for the quality of online education, but faculty members will need to keep an eye on this committee. As reported elsewhere in this issue, faculty in the Southern University System have expressed grave concern about the impact of e-learning options on the maintenance of the character of institutions and on the completion of institutional mission. E-Learning has also been a flash point with regard to faculty compensation and working conditions, with some suggesting that e-learning will create the next generation of professional sweatshops.

Jindal Appoints Lawton to Higher Ed Board Position

With the passing of Ben Mount, the LSU System lost a distinguished representative from overlooked Southwest Louisiana. Replacing the buoyant Mount is oil tycoon Jack Lawton, of picturesque Sulphur, home base of Bargain Bee group coupons and economic center of the aforementioned decentralized region. Yet another Jindal appointee to a higher education management board, Lawton, whose family gave its name to the "L Club" alongside LSU's Tiger Stadium, shows promising signs insofar as his service to the Center for Coastal Conservation indicates an acquaintance with rural Louisiana. The future will provide Lawton with an opportunity to show that the ancient traditions of variety that have given Louisiana its merit will overcome to push to uniformity that characterizes state government in recent times.

MOVIE REVIEW: *The Descendants* (Alexander Payne, 2011)

BY CARL FREEDMAN



Carl Freedman

Editor's note: Louisiana faculty are noted for the multiplicity of their talents and indomitability of their spirit. So it is that, after a pupation period as a restaurant critic, our ever-Pygmalionizing columnist Carl Freedman has returned to our pages, this time in an ever-more-glorious form as a movie reviewer. Freedman hopes to keep our readers up-to-date on the best and the worst in current as well as historic cinema and to keep the tickets vending and the DVDs dispensing through his persuasive cultural commentaries. Welcome back, Carl, and, readers, enjoy this first informative review of *The Descendants*!

People often complain, quite justly, that Hollywood cinema is far too larded with special effects, explosions, car chases, and fart jokes. Wouldn't it be nice—so you think—if there were more films about human feelings and human relationships? But then, just as you think that, Alexander Payne makes a movie about human feelings and human relationships, and you find yourself wishing for special effects, explosions, car chases, and fart jokes.

Is this judgment a bit too harsh? Perhaps. But *About Schmidt* (2002) seemed to me almost unwatchably bad, not least because it amounted to the professional funeral (or burial) of a once-great actor, Jack Nicholson—not to mention the shamefully weak use it made of Kathy Bates, a fine and underrated actress. As to *Sideways* (2004), Payne's most widely discussed effort, my first reaction to it was an inability to look at the bottles in my wine racks without feeling slightly sick. A few more viewings, however, did convince me that it could actually have been a pretty good film had it starred someone with an acting style less annoying than Paul Giamatti's.

Payne's latest film, *The Descendants*, has two strengths: some pleasant cinematography of three of the Hawaiian islands and a strong starring performance by George Clooney, a first-rate actor now in his prime. Clooney plays Matt King, a wealthy attorney and the scion of a large Hawaiian family whose haole (i.e., white) roots in the islands go back to the middle of the nineteenth century and whose Native Hawaiian roots go back centuries earlier than that. As the film opens, Matt's wife is in a coma caused by a boating accident. The doctors tell him that there is no chance she will regain consciousness and that, by the provisions of the living will she had signed, the life-support machinery must soon be disconnected. Before he can come to terms with becoming a widower and the sole parent of two daughters (one 10, the other 17) to whom he has never been close, he learns that his wife had been having a torrid affair and was planning to divorce him. Meanwhile, he is tasked with administering a complex (and potentially very lucrative) land deal for his extended family.

Summarized thus, the film's set-up may seem promising. The problem is that the writing is so lame that none of the human drama ever becomes real. The film wants us to believe that Matt develops a better relationship with his daughters but can't really show us how that happens. The daughters themselves are defined mainly by cliché (though the older one has a boyfriend who initially seems a stereotypical teenage slacker but who turns out to have more depth and sensitivity than we expect). The land deal is supposed to mesh somehow with the family problems, but the connections are entirely forced, without much intellectual or emotional logic. Most of the (very slow) action of the movie, in fact, concerns Matt's attempts to track down his wife's lover, though it never seems clear, even to Matt, exactly why that is such an urgent task.

The only genuine drama of the film, in fact, is Clooney's mighty battle with the abysmally bad screenplay. Again and again this hugely talented actor struggles to supply the complexity and emotional subtlety that the writers were unable to achieve and about which Payne himself (a co-screenwriter as well as the director) appears simply not to care. Clooney does a heroic job, but even the greatest actors are limited by their material. I doubt that Laurence Olivier at his best could have made Matt King seem interesting, important, or actual.

I will end with a detail that, though minor in itself, nicely illustrates how clueless a filmmaker Payne can be. There is a wonderful moment in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) when Cary Grant, on the run from the bad guys, crashes through the window of a young woman's room. When the woman sees only that someone is breaking in, she yells "Stop!" in tones of shock and fear. But then, when she sees that the man in her bedroom is Cary Grant, and that, far from trying to molest her, he is dashing through the room in order to get out the door as quickly as possible, she repeats, "Stop!"—this time in a pleading voice dripping with sexual desire. Payne has a chance to achieve something a little bit similar in a scene where Matt, taking his leave of the woman married to his wife's lover in a social situation that formally calls for a handshake or, at most, a friendly hug, instead takes her in his arms and kisses her right on the mouth. A director paying much attention to his own film might have told the actress (Judy Greer) to react somehow to the fact that she is, after all, being kissed by George Clooney. But no. The moment is as inert as nearly all the others. In a way it is appropriate that a coma lies at the center of the movie's situation: because *The Descendants*, for the most part, is a dramatically comatose film.

Secrets of the Policy Statements: Mixology in the UL System

Last month, the *Newsletter* began a new feature, "Secrets of the Policy Statements," that revealed little-known, unusual, or quirky aspects of the rules and regulations that govern higher education in Louisiana. This month, "Secrets of the Policy Statements" looks at University of Louisiana System policy number FB-IV.VII.-1, which governs the dispensing of alcoholic beverages on University of Louisiana campuses. What immediately strikes the reader about this policy, seemingly crafted as a response to the good-times mentality prevalent in some corners of our diverse state, is its dazzling complexity. No less than sixteen conditions must be met in order to dispense a brew. Those with an interest in typefaces will rejoice that event announcements must mention the availability of non-alcoholic beverages equally "prominently" with references to demon rum (text point sizes will be measured). Those who have campaigned for mathematical education in Louisiana will worry when noting that specific references to quantities or numbers (such as the "number of kegs") are barred from advertisements. Students of Descartes and other rationalists will take pleasure in the assertion that a "reasonable" portion of an event budget must be used for food rather than drink. In a fit of optimism, the sagacious lawgivers have suggested that the presence of alcoholic beverages at an event may not be used as an "inducement" to attend it—a policy which seems to suggest that advertisers ought to control reader responses. And much more! Perhaps most suggestive is the statement that "the university [presumably in its totality] reserves the right to make unannounced visits to functions." No one in the Claiborne Building wants to miss the party!

Chronicle of Higher Education Probes Board Memberships

Just when faculty members are being branded as cranky for inquiring into connections, reciprocal or otherwise, between campus executives, boards, and interest groups, a provocative study in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* explores this very topic and defines a host of conflicts and ethical problems. In its January 20th issue, the *Chronicle* raises questions about campus executives who sit on boards which exert influence on campus or system decisions. The story is available [online](#) (note: purchase or subscription may be required to view the entire story).

Newsletter Restaurant and Movie Critic Carl Freedman Appears on Major Radio Talk Show

Fans of Carl Freedman's restaurant and now movie reviews will rush to the online podcast of Carl's appearance on the hit WRKF morning talk show, *The Jim Engster Show*. Carl has recently released a new book, *The Age of Nixon: A Study in Cultural Power*, which has the over-forty nation jumping, which makes a great gift for the fan of mid-century strong men, and which has future historians waiting to be born so as to read this already essential book once they get through graduate school. Freedman's lively broadcast can be experienced by visiting the [WRK web site](#) and then searching out and listening to the January 30th edition of the Engster hour.

University Researchers Boycotting Elsevier

From one of our favorite readers, LOUIS statewide library information network director Sara Zimmerman, comes word of faculty boycott, led primarily by researchers in the STEM disciplines, against big-budget publishers and soaring access fees, with mega-publisher Elsevier being the principal target of the protest. Zimmerman reports that LOUIS supports ICOLC, the International Coalition of Library Consortia, which has, for decades, charged into the front lines of the battle against extravagant publication fees and costs. Full details of the boycott were reported in [national outlets](#).

Faculty Activist Promoted to Associate Dean Despite Dissenting Views



One of the many disincentives to engagement in faculty governance is the understandable if unverified speculation that expressing dissenting views may impede career development. That erroneous perception was once again corrected when long-time faculty activist, ULM Faculty Senate Vice-President, and University of Louisiana System Faculty Advisory Council Chair Donna Rhorer recently ascended to an associate dean's chair at ULM. Better, Donna, whose reward is long overdue, vows to continue her service to faculty. Congratulations, Donna, on yet another job well done.

LSU's Francioni Hall Hazards Cleared

The law of unintended consequences never spares LSU. Everyone applauds the erection of a new agriculture building adjacent to A. P. Tureaud Hall on the LSU campus, but more than a few faculty members were startled by the reduction in access, whether for disabled persons or emergency responders, that resulted from the conversion of the lowlands behind Francioni Hall (a haunt for engineers) into a construction staging area. Fortunately, LSU's able traffic czar, Gary Graham, came to the rescue, identifying the culprit as a utility crossing structure and arranging for the contractor to resolve the access problems. Thanks, Gary, for lending a hand to those in need.

Letter to the Editor: RE: Southeastern Provost Attempts to Align Tenure Evaluation with LAGrad Act Criteria

By Richard A. Schwartz, President of Faculty Senate in Southeastern Louisiana University



Richard A. Schwartz

An editorial appearing in the January 2012 edition of this newsletter highlighted the concern of many that performance expectations for universities stemming from the Grad Act may lead to undesirable consequences that defy the sanctity of the learning process and the values that we, as educators, hold true. Indeed, as suggested in the editorial, reducing rigor in the classroom or otherwise ensuring that students remain in good standing, regardless of their true level of achievement, is one means through which universities can realize increased retention and progression rates (i.e., Grad Act criteria).

But, let's not be foolish. Above the fog and hysteria created by the Grad Act, where rational thoughts void of reactive emotion are possible, a maneuver by a university's administration with the goal of placing achievement of Grad Act performance goals above achievement of excellence in the classroom, no matter how cleverly disguised, would be easily recognized and met with scorn and contempt by faculty. (A public lynching would occur and resolutions of condemnation by faculty senates across the state would ensue. Wouldn't it?)

In all seriousness, I would like to thank Dr. Cope for allowing me, as President of the Faculty Senate at Southeastern Louisiana University, the opportunity to address comments in the editorial. It is my hope that what I present will dispel any misperceptions regarding a positive process that began at Southeastern last semester and continues as of the writing of this letter.

To recap, the opinion presented in the editorial was based on a memo by Southeastern's Provost, Dr. Tammy Bourg, to a committee to be tasked with the responsibility of reviewing Southeastern's tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines. The committee was formed, in part, due to a resolution passed unanimously by the Southeastern Faculty Senate on February 9, 2011. The resolution can be found at the following link:

<http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/Depts/FacSen/resolution101106.pdf>

The editorial condemned Dr. Bourg for using the Grad Act as the backdrop against which the review should proceed. I served on the committee along with ten other educators from many disciplines whose concern for student achievement and respect for the profession are unquestioned within the Southeastern community. With full knowledge of the process, I offer the assurance that the referenced memo, merely one among many documented communications with Dr. Bourg, presents an incomplete view of the committee's charge, especially if considered by itself.

Generally, the committee's responsibility was 1) to better understand why many students become disconnected, stop out, or drop out (an issue confronting all institutions of higher education), 2) to identify the essential parts of faculty members' jobs that may address the problem in new and effective ways, and 3) to communicate what is found through adjustments to guidelines that provide direction and inform practice. From the outset, the sentiment of the committee, one also shared by Dr. Bourg, was that we were addressing a matter of concern in a substantive way that has been, and will continue to be, a focus of all of higher education. From this perspective, the Grad Act was moot. A review of the explanatory notes submitted with the revised guidelines best reflect the spirit of the committee's work. Excerpts are provided below and the entire text may be found on the Southeastern Faculty Senate website at:

http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/Depts/FacSen/GUIDE_TO_RECOMMENDED_REVISIONS_10-25-11.pdf

"The committee believes that the new language reflects the essence of teaching. Further, the literature suggests that faculty activities reflecting engagement, purposive guidance, support, and interaction promote retention, progression, and completion."

"Based on the presentations of committee members and consideration of the literature...engaging and supporting students, providing guidance, and interacting with them...are important activities of all faculty (whether in the classroom or outside of it), and we, as a committee, would argue that these activities more than adequately capture the essence of mentoring."

"New language has expanded the definition [of professional activity] to place greater emphasis on the need for student involvement/participation with faculty in scholarly pursuits. As with teaching, the literature suggests that engaging students through involvement/participation in research projects (e.g., for publication, for class) engenders a 'connectedness' to classmates, faculty, their discipline of study, etc., that promotes retention, progression, and completion."

"New language...further expands the definition of service, especially service to students...language was kept...to create an emphasis on approachability, understanding, ability to listen, caring, willingness to guide, and general rapport, all of which are qualities that promote retention, progression, and completion."

If providing language in tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines that place a degree of weight on teaching, professional, and service activities that lead to student persistence (i.e., retention and progression), then so be it - even if doing so might be considered "alignment" with the Grad Act. To assert that less rigor in the classroom will occur is misguided. To the contrary, the revised language in the guidelines encourages faculty members to reconsider their roles as teachers and professionals with regard to fostering student engagement and connectedness, and assists in providing a shared understanding of the true scope of their jobs.

As I alluded to above, the committee intentionally distinguished and kept separate the Grad Act and our task of revising the tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines, with the support of Dr. Bourg. We discussed several times in committee meetings that educators have seen "Grad Acts" come and go, but our tenure and promotion policy should be written in a way so as to transcend time and circumstance.

In sum, after months of labor, diligence, research, and discussion of the most important aspects of faculty members' jobs, the committee revised Southeastern's tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines in the manner envisioned by Dr. Bourg. Further, I believe that the revised guidelines will continue to promote and recognize true excellence among faculty, place a new emphasis on creating an engaging learning environment, and hopefully cause students to place more value and greater weight on staying in school versus dropping out.

On a closing note, I would like to thank Dr. Kevin Cope for his willingness to listen and provide this opportunity to make others aware of our true effort. Keep up the great work Kevin!

Initial Findings of Statewide Salary Study Point to Deficiencies

Recent revelations of substantial "retention increases" at Louisiana campuses (per a directive from the Board of Regents encouraging the reallocation of funds for the purpose of retaining select employees) have prompted colleagues statewide to begin a survey of compensation both statewide and in comparison to peer institutions. Commencing as an initiative of the medical campus in Shreveport and spearheaded by LSUHSC colleagues Tammy Dugas and Michael Mathis, the salary survey is now requisitioning data from a wide range of campuses and is locating benchmark data from professional organizations. Already available is a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating the salary deficiencies and inequities at the medical areas—a PowerPoint that also could serve as a model for comparisons among other types of campuses statewide and nationwide [go to <http://www.lsu.edu/senate/media%20archive.html> and then click the link for the Tammy Dugas presentation]. When the data collection and analysis is complete, the results for the study will be presented to System management heads along with proposals for creating salary policies suitable for Louisiana's advancing universities.

LSU Athletic Department Clarifies Tweeting Policy

Heads turned when word got out that the prestigious LSU Athletic Department was monitoring Twitter "tweets" released by student-athletes with the intention of minimizing embarrassment and curtailing damaging statements. Although they were wise enough to recognize that Thomas Jefferson, in penning our roster of privileges as citizens, never thought of "tweeting," faculty governors were concerned that liberties which animated even the "Arab Spring" and which energized some of the most oppressed people on our humble planet might fare less well in a campus environment. Fortunately, a quick call to associate athletic director Michael Bonnette resolved the matter. Bonnette confirmed that no censorship was underway and that, at most, athletes were counseled that the use of foul language is not the best way to advance careers.

New Website Discloses State Salaries

Since the time of Bernardo de Gálvez, discovery of data has been a challenging task in a state where the political as well as other kinds of heat makes folks more fond of moonlight than sunshine. Those who have sought information about compensation for state employees have more often found themselves on the dark side of the aforementioned planetary companion than in the well-lit archives of openness. At long last, a blazing ray of sunshine has burst through the blinds with the mounting of a new [web site](http://LouisianaSunshine.org), where visitors may discover the salary of any state employees at any state agency, including any and all higher education campuses. Site users should be warned that the database only reaches through the end of 2010 and that it reflects only the state portion of reimbursement. Some employees may receive funds from private sources. Nevertheless, the database indicates the value that Louisiana assigns to most of its employees and will come as an eye-opener to many.

LouisianaSunshine.org



Consulting Firm Showcases Elaborate, Alarming Presentation on “OneLSU” at Shreveport Civic Center

Given the frequency with which, in Louisiana, six-figure consulting contracts are doled out to firms in parts unknown, the unbiased observer would conclude that our money-flinging state is in the midst of a gold rush. Lavish but sterile spending reached a new high point with not only the release of a portfolio of proposals for the restructuring of higher education management in north Louisiana but with the rental of a high-ticket facility in Shreveport for the sole purpose of unveiling the proposals to an audience that may have been smaller than anticipated. The first step in this curious pageant was the commissioning of *Eva Klein Associates*, a firm whose principal partner bills herself as a member of a “niche real estate development firm” and as someone “focused on the Global Knowledge Economy.” Primary authorship of the report was credited to the MBA-enhanced Ms. Klein and to a businessman, with academic personnel appearing in the report only in a spotty list of interviewees. Chief among the proposals was the consolidation of Louisiana Tech and LSU in Shreveport; absent from the report was any mention of the traditions of these campuses or, for that matter, of the development and fundraising advantages of a campus with some sort of identity with which donors may identify. Release of the report occurred in a strange ceremony at the Shreveport Civic Center, with Minden-based celebrity physician and cardiology clinic entrepreneur Phillip Rozeman mixing the roles of Moses and Hoss Cartwright as he unveiled a series of PowerPoint slides advising the local academic tribes of their past error and future promise while also proposing to rustle LSUS and LaTech out of their corrals and into a new hybrid academy. Also among the slugs in Rozeman’s six-shooter were thoughts concerning medical education in Louisiana, a business in which Rozeman is more than a little concerned.

Reading the richly-illustrated an expensively produced Eva Klein report reveals additional surprises. In the *January* issue of this *Newsletter*, alarm bells were rung when political hired gun James Carville took aim at regional campuses in the state and lambasted assorted chancellors who were not present to defend themselves. The Eva Klein report not only acknowledges this and other attempts to rearrange (or raid) campuses in south as well as in north Louisiana but combines those attempts in a new logo, “oneLSU,” a new concept that the report associates with the doings of LSU’s Flagship Coalition. Truth having the bad habit of announcing itself, the Klein report thus raises unanswered questions about the relation between booster syndicates at north and south Louisiana as well as about faculty input into the barrage of allegedly objective reports.

Those who have time or interest or perhaps perverse curiosity may enjoy viewing the strange but also alarming Rozeman presentation via a convenient [online link](#). Meanwhile, the LSU System has issued a memorandum reminding members of the higher education community that changes such as those proposed must be accomplished through public debate rather than through private negotiations. Lombardi has established a work group to evaluate and respond to the Rozeman proposal; LaTech and the University of Louisiana have yet to take action. Mathematicians are invited to calculate how much of a raise might have been provided to LSUS faculty by using the funds expended on this project (and its Cannes-style premiere) to support faculty salary increments.

Memo by Former System President Supports Researchers’ Rights to Intellectual Property

Those who have been following the latest batch of intellectual property controversies in Louisiana universities have reason to celebrate the reappearance of a letter written in the not-so-distant past by former LSU System President Bill Jenkins, who, despite his stubborn insistence on erroneous policies in LSU System document PM-35, nevertheless knew what motivated and what impaired researchers. Drawn up from the archives of the IP equivalent of Charles Dickens’s *Ghost of Christmas Past*, the letter affirms that the LSU System recognizes that faculty “should, in most cases, own and possess certain exclusive rights of copyright to the scholarly, pedagogical, and educational works that they create while employed with the University” and adds that “such works generally include books, articles, lectures, theses, dissertations, other literary works, works of art or musical compositions” as well as, specifically, materials generated in the offering of “Distance Learning.” This powerful and comprehensive state should put to rest claims by University of Louisiana System Vice-President Brad O’Hara that the University of Louisiana System policy proposal resembles that of the LSU System. Also in question are new policies on various campuses that allow for involuntary taping and podcasting of faculty lectures. Retroactive thanks are due to Bill Jenkins for affirming the intellectual property rights of faculty members.

LIFESTYLE FEATURE

Cultivating for the Cultured, or, the Seeds of Affluence

In the old days, long before the invention of “TurboTax,” a name implying that those nasty taxes that Caesar Augustus levied on the holy land could be as fashionable as jet engines and formula one racing, the first postal delivery day after Christmas brought a mailbox full of Internal Revenue Service forms. Nowadays, with the tax man and his forms safely locked up in a DVD carton, December 26th signals the beginning of the spring onrush not of tax documents but of seed catalogues. Full of glamorized renderings of items that routinely lay in dirt, modern seed catalogues target those cultured persons who, like Marie Antoinette playing at shepherding, aspire to a bucolic lifestyle at the same time that they carry out research programs, steward sustainable-ecological backyard farms, and otherwise multi-task. Seed catalogues now come in such great number that a review of the subtleties distinguishing these seminal offerings may divert or even instruct *Newsletter* readers, who comprise the market sector targeted by merchants who package the memory of the rural breeze in tiny airtight envelopes.

First in the mailbox every year are the polished, wide-ranging catalogues from the top two bigtime seed combines, Burpee and Park. Produced on slick paper with high-resolution multi-color printing, these relentlessly illustrated volumes serve as the comprehensive universities of the seed kingdom. They claim to offer at least a little bit of something for everyone and they vaunt to represent the cutting edge of flower-breeding research. As with flagship institutions, however, barnacles pop up here and there and corrosion deforms an otherwise aqua-dynamic hull. Burpee, for example, offers just enough varieties of every species to fill a page—a page that is smaller than might appear owing to the lavish, color-enhanced, and space-filling image of each and every flower, fruit, or vegetable. Burpee vends seeds that will grow almost everywhere because, in their hyper-hybridization, they come from nowhere, having no natural habitat. Repetition through the years is difficult with Burpee, with over-bred varieties coming and going as soon as plant pathologies catch up with ephemeral varieties that can maintain their souped-up performance only until a new disease finds its niche. (Continued on page 6)

LSU Begins Colossal Internal Study and Review of Student-Athlete Experience



Kelly Rusch, NCAA Review Co-Director

Nicked by a few mishaps but nevertheless less than a few miles from the goal of admirability, LSU and its athletic apparatus have commenced a colossal internal study and review by way of demonstrating that most prized of modern characteristics, pro-activity, to the NCAA. Under the able management of Professors Kelly Rusch and

Stacia Haynie, the latest mega-committee on the LSU campus pushes fifty members drawn from every corner of a competence-intensive institution. In addition to a steering committee, the review battalion includes sub-committees on the student-athlete experience; on gender and ethnicity; on academics; and on fiscal management, the latter including LSU Faculty Senate president Kevin Cope and LSU Faculty Senate Secretary George Stanley.

Southern University (New Orleans) Faculty Slams Online Program

Never has news traveled quickly from new Orleans to Baton Rouge; perhaps passing all those levee bonfires in Gramercy and Lutchter requires tedious navigation. After something of a communications delay, the Newsletter has learned that the Faculty Senate of Southern University in New Orleans has delivered a [blistering letter](#) to the Southern University System administration advising System managers that faculty members have rejected a contract with Education Online Services for the provision of online instruction. The letter scourges Southern headquarters for violating faculty rights, contravening faculty control over the curriculum, making “unrealistic” revenue projections, and ignoring critical elements in the contract, including the question of faculty compensation. The letter further warns that development of an exclusively online “brand” negates the mission of an “HBCU” insofar as it eliminates the “nurturing environment” and “quality education” that leads to minority advancement.

Live Webcam, Time Lapse Video Show Off Progress on Billion Dollar University Medical Center

Always able to make the aesthetic best from an economically curious situation, the nimble web designers in John Lombardi’s LSU System office have created yet another internet marvel in the form of a direct link to a webcam stationed adjacent to and apparently above the construction site for the billion-plus University Medical Center. Accessible via a direct [link](#) or via a large button on the LSU System web site, this ultra-cool invention from “Atelier Lakeshore” offers an up-to-the-minute view of the sprawling, machinery-laden hospital venue as well as a time-lapse simulated movie showing long-term action and progress. Also worthy of a view is the link button currently on the [LSU System site](#), which features a bright yellow, hard-hitting, hard-hat-style stencil font suggesting sturdy longshoremen swinging pickaxes and singing not the blues, but the LSU System anthem.



LIFESTYLE (continued)

Burpee's strong point has always been marigolds, with old W. Atlee Burpee having indulged a lifelong mania for the production of a pure-white species of same, yet today a paltry ten varieties of this most diverse of plants barely speckle the Burpee pages. Park Seed, although also a voraciously gigantic concern that has lately gobbled up novelty plant vendor Wayside Gardens, does a bit better than Burpee by emphasizing plants adapted to warmer weather and by pitching to southern gardeners. Unfortunately, recent years have seen too much of an emphasis on Parks' "whopper" varieties, varieties in which fruit or flower size outstrips both flavor and disease resistance. Park has also made too strong a push for gardening products such as patented seed starting systems—systems that seldom work as advertised and that trap customers into a single coordinated line of products and replacement components.



Gardening, although oriented toward the future—toward the production of summer bounty from spring preparations—includes a large cadre of nostalgia buffs: dirt-daubers who would like to step into the imaginary old-timey world of *The Prairie Home Companion* or *The Vermont Country Store* or Cracker Barrel restaurants or maybe even the Grand Ole Opry. That group of backward-tilting gardeners has been colonized by a combine of companies that now belong to Jung Seed but that also try to maintain their separate marketing identities, all while hovering together under the semi-fictional umbrella of the R. H. Shumway company. R. H. Shumway, who enjoyed phenomenal success as a marketer of farm and vegetable products in the first three decades of the twentieth century, self-fashioned himself as "The Pioneer Seedsman" and thereby joined Justin Wilson, Minnie Pearl, Frederic Remington, and Ma and Pa Kettle in the curious gallery of commercially successful and sincerely synthetic rustic icons. Today, no less than four seed catalogues wander in and out of the Shumway penumbra: the marquee R. H. Shumway "garden guide"; Jung Seeds and Plants; Totally Tomatoes; and the Vermont Bean Seed company. Despite their carefully crafted regional identities (Shumway and Jung appearing as chilly but hearty envoys from the far north; "VBS" seeming to roll out of the backwoods counter-culture of the Vermont mountains; Totally Tomatoes apparently being spawned along an aisle at Whole Foods Markets), all four catalogues strive for an analogous old-fashioned look, using newsprint instead of coated stock, setting in fonts from the turn of the twentieth century, and featuring antique drawings of plant species rather than photographs. Two of the Shumway companies make no claim to be "organic" and indeed brag about their various potions and powders for compromised plants, yet, remarkably, end up offering as many offbeat, heirloom, and novelty seed varieties as any of the explicitly "ecological" companies, in part owing to their pursuit of the antiquarian and evocative. Vermont Bean Seed has also always maintained an excellent line of oriental greens (Brassica varieties) as well as a superb line of herbs, including the rare but delicious salad burnet. Vermont Bean Seed, however, carries the highest apparent prices (apparent, because the other Shumway companies make up the difference with smaller seed packets). Reading these catalogues is a delightful experience, but careful gardeners should not confuse charm with true multitudinousness; finding that perfect offering requires work and scrutiny. It should be noted that Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope purchases all of his marigold seeds (his favorites being "Harlequin" and the LSU-appropriate "Tiger Eyes") from Shumway-affiliated companies.



A cultural spinoff from the "nostalgia" companies such as those in the Shumway empire are the handful of companies that have colonized the "organic" market in the same way that acquisition-hungry Whole Foods has conquered chain after chain of specialty grocer. Chief among these new eco-entrepreneurs is Seeds of Change, which offers only certified organic seeds, even among non-edible flower species. Seeds of Change presents the viewer with a carefully-cultivated neo-UC-Berkeley image, printing in a warm color palette and mixing in pictures of eccentrics and tied-dyed-wrapped 1960s survivors doing what appears to be wholesome labor in fields or perhaps contributing to mutually supportive, picturesquely nurturing therapy groups. The danger with the Seeds of Change collection is that its purportedly heirloom varieties (some of which are available at a much lower price in other sources) are so specialized as to grow successfully in only a few climates. Despite its health-fad look, Seeds of Change is actually stronger in its flower than in its vegetable collection. Its selection of sunflower and amaranth varieties will turn heads. Sadly, however, its marigold selection is declining, with the stunning Cempazuchi marigold—the semi-wild naturalized giant marigold that blooms in autumn in Mexico and that adds a dazzling Halloween touch to a Louisiana October—disappearing from the current catalogue. Meanwhile, the redoubtable Redwood City Seed Company, with its abundant Central and South American varieties and with the persisting impress of its founder, an opted-out northern Californian from the Gypsy Boots generation, keeps plugging away with its low-priced, sturdy, and ever-delicious (or, in the case of flowers, ever-attractive) open-pollinated seed lines, stubbornly clinging to its black-and-white xeroxed catalogue (although it has given up its old habit of issuing refunds or adjustments in postage stamps).

A few catalogues exceed even the "organic" line in the pursuit of niche markets. Most admirable among these is John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds, which, with its quaint hummingbird logo and delicate, bee- and butterfly-enhanced drawings of plants, presents itself as the botanist's answer to the Food Network, that video cornucopia of delicately prepared offbeat ingredients. Scheepers characterizes itself as purely culinary, offering seeds for only edible plants while commanding Calphalon and All-Clad prices (the English Greenhouse cucumber, for example, goes for \$5.95 for a paltry ten seeds). True snob appeal is the specialty of Cream of the Crop Seeds and plants, which categorizes seed offerings by their aesthetic qualities and compositional characteristics: whether fragrant, whether appropriate for an artful cottage garden, and presumably whether they would look good in a Van Gogh painting. Somewhat less successful is Territorial Seed Company, which tries to offer an artistic version of the nostalgic Shumway catalogues but which ends up looking clumsy, directionless, and cramped (although, admittedly, it is just about the only catalogue to pay proper homage to the wonders of neglected veggies such as the seemingly humble but actually spectacular cauliflower).

What else can one say when thinking about delicious vegetables, fine fruits, vaulting table bouquets, and the gardening process than, well, dig in!

Former LSU Professor Dies in Accident

The Advocate reported that Eugene Tims was killed while crossing the street in downtown Baton Rouge on February 4. Tims was a retired professor emeritus of electrical engineering at LSU and an active member of the Presbyterian church community. Tims was 90. A brief biographical sketch of Tims is available in the news feed on the right hand side of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering's [home page](#). A fuller report of the accident is available online in *The Advocate*.

Faculty Senate, LSUnited Sponsored Workshop Gives Faculty Chance to Voice Concerns about TRSL

Faculty outrage over the shortcomings of the retirement programs found a constructive outlet at a mid-February event co-sponsored by the LSU Faculty Senate and LSUnited, the fledgling faculty union for Louisiana academic professionals. Drawing a standing-room-only crowd, the presentation by three TRSL (Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana) representatives covered the full range of retirement issues, from the raw facts about the defined contribution and the defined benefit plans to the array of retirement-related legislation slated for the upcoming Louisiana legislative session. What began as a straightforward PowerPoint summary swelled into the Q&A session of the century as well-prepared and understandably concerned faculty members pounded TRSL representatives with question after question. Worthy of note was the change in tone from TRSL representatives, who no longer defended the extant retirement plans but presented themselves as the machinery rather than the decision apparatus of the retirement dynasty. Also answering questions was Louisiana Association of Educators Executive Director Michael Walker-Jones. Notably absent from this event were administrative representatives (unless they appeared undercover).

Tip of the Month: Cat Haven

Anyone who has labored long in universities knows the dangers of hothouse environments and the purebred occupants thereof. So it is that the "pet store" of old, with its purebred "doggy in the window" who commands a price (per the old song), has long gone out of fashion, leaving the purchase of pets to those with a taste for genetic novelty or for blandness of temperament. Adopted animals now carry cachet. Recognizing that no less than Cardinal Richelieu was a lover of those complex creatures who fill the feline phalanxes, the clever people of Baton Rouge have chartered a half dozen or more cat rescue societies. The most ambitious of these is surely Cat Haven, a sanctuary facility that, with its unique cat-appropriate interiors, offers better, more modern architecture and design than do most of the human homes in Baton Rouge. Cat Haven provides an array of marvelously mixed and temperamentally diverse companions for every sort of colleague, whether the philosopher lost in nocturnal lucubrations or the kinesiologist committed to muscle and movement. Visit the Cat haven website at www.cathaven.org for adoption instructions!



Cat Haven Adoptee

Lunchtime Lagniappe, the popular history lecture series at the Capitol Park Museum, is resuming March 7 with four programs covering topics related to Louisiana's bicentennial.



March 7

Object Lessons: 200 Years of Decorative Arts in La.

Louisiana State Museum curator Katie Hall describes historic furniture and decorative arts on display in the museum's bicentennial exhibition.



March 14

Claiborne and Louisiana: The "Outsider" as "Insider"

Louisiana State Museum curator Matthew Reonas traces the political transformation of Louisiana's first governor, William C. C. Claiborne, from Anglo-American "outsider" to Creole "insider."



March 21

Discovering the *CSS Arkansas*

Civil War historian Richard Holloway follows the Confederate ironclad *CSS Arkansas* in action from Vicksburg, Miss., to Baton Rouge.



March 28

The La. State Museum Civil War-Era Submarine

Louisiana State Museum director of collections Greg Lambousy presents the history of a Civil War submarine on display in the Museum's first-floor gallery.

Location Details

The Capitol Park Museum is located at 660 N. Fourth St. For more information call 225.342.5428 or visit www.crt.state.la.us/museum.

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