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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, Holiday 2012

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

# LSU FACULTY SENATE

## Monthly Newsletter



### President's Welcome

Whatever else it may connote, the Christmas season is about hope—about illumination during the darkest days of the year. Although it now basks in the highly refracted light of infamy, having been spanked by Louisiana's Attorney General and having drawn reproaches from SACSCOC accreditors, the LSU System has, in the past, enjoyed more than a few Star-of-Bethlehem moments. When the University of Louisiana System diluted tenure guarantees, for example, the LSU System garnered applause for its flagship-quality approach to this foundation of academic freedom;

when the Southern University System lurched into financial exigency, the LSU System glimmered over the horizon as an example of nimble financial management. These past achievements leave one wondering why the LSU Board of Supervisors is now eclipsing its past glories in the cloud of mistakes that is its restructuring and presidential search efforts.

At the most superficial level, the actions of LSU's Supervisors seem bewildering. Why it is that Board members who were all appointed by the same Governor and who have more than enough votes to do anything that the Governor orders should do something so damaging to their reputations as staging a vote on restructuring a mere thirty minutes after the release of the report on which that vote was allegedly based? Why a System should believe that "town hall meetings" that are little more than campaign speeches should count as community input is likewise a puzzler.

We do not know whether there really are any problems within higher education that are not, plain and simple, induced by lack of money. Neither the Board nor the LSU System nor the Governor have released any hard numbers to show that the proposed changes either to the organization chart or the structure of universities will save any money or produce any improvement in standing. We can, however, be sure that the culture of not only LSU's but indeed all Louisiana Boards will preclude success at problem-solving efforts. The astounding homogeneity of the LSU Board—not a single woman or minority citizen voted on the consolidation proposal—underlines the homegrown nature of higher education leadership, which is appointed by political district and which therefore bars refreshment from outside influences. Owing to this inbuilt chumminess, the Board, which is rumored to have rifts and factions that it keeps private, fears any vote or even conversation that threatens the veneer of unanimity. The result is a kind of ideological celebrity cult in which cohort groups, rather than cheering celebrities such as David Cassidy or Britney Spears, hoot and holler for the latest reform proposal from the capitol. Paternalism and childishness come together in an aversion to data and a suspicion of outside ideas that might mar the image of the latest matinee idol.

A common feature of a celebrity cult, whether the worship of a movie star or of gubernatorial policies, is derivativeness. Celebrities fit extant rather than evolving ideas of the admirable. Louisiana Boards inevitably justify their innovations by referencing models from other states. In the same way that celebrities replicate our own shortcomings—sales of tabloids demonstrate that audiences love to discover that a "star" can fall victim to alcoholism or fight obesity—Boards look to states such as Florida that suffer from the same ills as does Louisiana. It is no accident that the search firm selected for the LSU presidential search is based in the south, discloses very little about its operations, and advocates for secrecy. All of those attributes reassure the Supervisor gang. Although we hear a great deal from the LSU System office about "moving forward" and "coming together," LSU, like many other educational systems in Louisiana, is rather looking in the mirror while moving back into the comfort zone.

There are both short-term palliatives and long-term cures to the problems that the behavior of the LSU Board of Supervisors symptomatize. In the short term, Boards need to shake off their fear of the expertise that abides in the faculty. Perhaps sensing the "competence" and "input" problems, the LSU Supervisors have begun breakfasting, at six-week intervals, with selected faculty members. They should now heed the advice that has been generously proffered and should spend less time talking about their intention to make their own decisions. Second, the Supervisors need to start speaking out on educational issues, whether the value of graduate education in a state where entry-level job training is venerated or the merits of academic freedom in a land where evolution-denying abounds. The Supervisors should start telling the truth: for example, that the AGB report originally offered three scenarios, all of which led to a bright future, but that the Board chose only to pursue one of those options. Third, and in the long run, the Board should advocate for its own restructuring: for a new System in which Supervisors come from throughout the country or even world—in which a Board that seeks to make its institutions globally competitive begins practicing what it preaches.

### Darth Vader Outdoes Bob Levy

Despite the attempts by Louisiana's myriad management and meta-management boards to rival socialist realism when it comes to melodramatic kitsch, Hollywood retains its edge when it comes to blockbuster struggles. Those eager to satirize the preemptive behavior of our statewide decision-imposers have made recourse to "The Force," issuing a YouTube-based parody of Star Wars in which a Darth-Vader figure who sounds remarkably like Regents Chair Bob Levy mounts an offensive against beleaguered faculty senates. Unfortunately, Yoda, who could have been played by one of the data-driven sages on the Regents staff, does not appear in this pilot for what we hope will become a series. Catch the futuristic action on and may the force be with you.

December 10, 2012

### Creamy Collegiality

Reader Mario Lozanov, general manager of "Bacio di Roma," the fresh entry in the gelato market located along ethnic eatery alleyway of Chimes Street, has reminded the *Newsletter* that Baton Rouge now sports a "gelato path" that includes not only his shop but Latte e Miele on Jefferson Highway and the gelato kiosk in Whole Foods Market. Lozanov would like readers to know that he aspires to transform his shop into "a focal meeting point for university intelligence, students, and faculty" and that Bacio di Roma offers the finest in Italian desserts, from an extensive line of gelato treats to tiramisu, cannoli, and chocolate mousse. Savory items such as chicken pesto panini and a four-cheese crepe enhance the entrée side of the menu. Those looking for a new venue in which to discuss the vagaries of academic life might enjoy sojourning with Mario, who continues the Chimes Street tradition of enlightening town-gown conversation coupled with delectable bites.

### Shadowy Agitprop Groups Plows Up Ag

The sharp-edged Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma* repeatedly advises irritable settlers that "the farmer and the cowman should be friends" and that acrimony is alien to the pastoral world of agriculture. Heads of more than steer turned in the big barn on Highland Road when a shadowy group identifying itself only by the science-fictional or perhaps neo-bolshevik moniker "center\_school" disseminated a document with the cryptic title "Vote no Confidence" in which the invisible but clearly frenzied authors slammed the AgCenter and Ag College administrations, budgeting practices, and leadership styles, alleging that cronyism was afoot among the ministers of the hoof and horn. Although no one knows who "center\_school" might be, speculation turns on insiders with media savvy (after all, *People Magazine* has played a role in the administrative heritage on the A&M campus), if only because the "Vote No Confidence" document culminated in a crescendo of conjectures concerning the amorous exploits of the Casanovas of Cattle (the Baton Rouge campuses may have material for a revenue-enhancing best-seller). Any best-seller is likely to run through several issues. The *Newsletter*, suspecting that "center\_school" will surface again, is willing to pay a premium in the form of honor to anyone who will identify this or these propagandist(s).



## HIGHER EDUCATION HEADLINER

### Elaine Smyth, Assistant Dean of LSU Libraries

The end of the Fall semester brought a familiar sight back to the A&M campus. With final exams upon them, a multitude of students clamored into coffee shops and unexpectedly-hushed dorm corners to find the often elusive study spot. When alternative sanctuaries just won't do, many students find themselves turning to an old favorite: Middleton Library.

The magnetizing effect that sends studiers into the hallways of Middleton during finals continues throughout the year, serving as just a small bit of the evidence that fortifies Elaine Smyth's belief that libraries will continue to thrive in the coming years. As Assistant Dean of the LSU Libraries, Smyth helps oversee the overall management of the LSU Libraries and has a hand in the policies and procedures that determine how patrons experience them.

These duties also extend to greater-university commitments, an area where Smyth embraces her opportunity to reinforce the library's place in higher education.

The latest opportunity to do so has come in the form of preparations for the 2014 SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) reaffirmation of accreditation process. As part of the LSU Quality Enhancement Program Planning Team, Smyth has been instrumental in talks to "promote information literacy as the quality enhancement plan or as a part of whatever quality enhancement plan happens." Information literacy, or the ability to understand the need for and to locate, use, and evaluate information, has been a special topic in libraries for decades and maintains its importance today. Smyth explains, "Lots of people come to LSU as undergraduates who haven't had a lot of [IL] training . . . so they don't have the tools and the skills they need to do the critical thinking that will help them be not only successful at LSU but throughout their working lives." The group is also pushing an undergraduate research initiative espoused by the team spearheaded by Randy Duran. Collectively, the individuals behind the LSU Quality Enhancement plan are involved in exciting developments. Smyth reiterates this point, saying "It has the possibility of really changing, for the better, really making improvements in the quality of undergraduate education at LSU because that's the whole purpose of the plan."

Smyth is also actively involved in a measure to establish an institutional repository that would provide safe storage and long-term access to the work of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members as well as university archive records, and also serve as a means of showcasing the university's finest output. In Smyth's opinion, the LSU Libraries' role in the project is innate: "For us in the libraries this is a natural fit for us. The IT people can take care of the technical part of it, but we can be involved in helping to organize and make it functional, helping make it be what it needs to be."

One project that hits closer to home for Smyth is the renovation of Hill Memorial Library's air conditioning units. The upgraded air conditioning system, which regulates the temperature and humidity in the stacks, has been long awaited. The project began five years ago when Smyth was head of Special Collections and was recently completed, leading Smyth and her colleagues at Hill to rejoice in their early Christmas gift.

The element of camaraderie is Smyth's favorite part of her job as Assistant Dean. As she says, the faculty and staff of the LSU Libraries ". . . make an incredible effort to do the very best they can with the limited resources they have. . . I am very impressed with how hard the people work and how much they do." Getting to work with more of her associates in Middleton library has been a real plus. As Assistant Dean, Smyth is happy "To be in a position to help [the faculty and staff] have more resources, find better ways to do what they're doing, and to advocate for them."

Smyth is no stranger to the impact librarians can have. "I got into the library field because I love books, and rare books, and to teach," she explains. In the LSU Special Collections, she observed plenty of students whose faces lit up among the rare materials in Hill Memorial Library. In those moments it is clear that "There's something that touches their lives . . . it gives them something." The love of books expressed by the Assistant Dean is not a new development. It dates back to her undergraduate studies in French Literature and her time as a library assistant, rare book curator, and cataloger.

The administrative position allows Smyth to spread her love of books and the knowledge they provide to others. "I can make it clear to people how vital the library is as the heart of the university. I think that's important," she says. Outreach continues to be instrumental as a way for students know that the library is part of the university package. "We have to let people know what we have to offer," and even more than that, "We have to demonstrate our stewardship of the resources the university has invested and will invest." The LSU Libraries were not immune to the university's wide spread budget cuts, but the unit has dealt with them in stride. Smyth says they recognize that "We have to be practical . . . [and] plan for the future wisely."

That future looks a little different depending on whom you ask, but Smyth is confident. "I think that in the past . . . libraries functioned in a different way, as we were bringing resources together, and organizing them and then sort of helping people to find them." Today, the organization aspect has lost some of its prominence, and the idea of the library as a physical place has shifted, with Smyth explaining that "I think the physical collections are not as important as a place for collaboration, and meeting, and study, and interaction, and librarians can help students and faculty. Librarians can help students and faculty do all those things better in the future." Special collections remain an area of importance, as it the one place where the library has things that nobody else has.

Collaboration is also a hot topic for the LSU Libraries. One positive step was LOUIS, as Louisiana library consortium, but Smyth believes the thinking must extend beyond even that. "We need to look even farther afield than that, and we actually are doing that" by participating in collaborative collection development and management.

The collaborative efforts of the LSU Libraries may be a good model for the university as a whole. "It's pretty hard to say what direction we are going to go, but certainly we are ready to work with our colleagues at other branches of LSU to make the best of resources we already have." In spite of the reorganization efforts underway, LSU has consistently provided students with an education they can be proud of. "We provide great return on the investments made, and I think we'll continue to do that. All of times people may not realize what great return they get on their investment, but it is really astonishing to me what the LSU community has been able to do with the resources it has."



Elaine Smyth

## Grambling: Best Known Up Close From Afar

When Southern University Board member and Baton Rougean Tony Clayton proposed the takeover by Southern University of Grambling University, the only audience member clapping seemed to be Steve Carter, the voluble state representative from Baton Rouge. Carter opined that the seizure would make sense. Is it not remarkable that those who know the most about an institution charged with helping the oppressed are those two-hundred miles away who lodge in the center of statewide power?

## Aviation Theme Lifts Off In New Bookstore

Despite its clumsy and overblown façade, the new LSU Book Store is creating a new space for sociable edification on the LSU campus. The undoubted showpiece of this new installation is the not-altogether-to-scale model of a P40 "Flying Tiger" aircraft with the genuine American Volunteer Group shark logo smiling across the nose along with the captain's seat of this improbable war craft occupied by no less than Mike the Tiger himself! True, LSU blew the game when it came to recruiting Hawker-Beechcraft to Baton Rouge (although it may not have been the best idea to pursue a company teetering on bankruptcy); true, LSU has repeatedly missed the boat when it comes to airplanes and the opportunity to promote aerospace studies. Perhaps Mike the Tiger's daring thirty-degree bank over the book shelves will draw university officialdom back to the perpetual bank that is the aviation industry.



Tiger Plane

## North of the Border Goes North of Florida

The "lifestyle feature" in the October 2012 issue of the *Newsletter*, on the Mexican cuisine scene in Baton Rouge, has drawn a suggestion from reader Dave Besse III, a Director of Administration in the LSU Office of Auxiliary Services. Dave advises us that the colorful La Morenita Meat Market, just north of Florida Boulevard in the vicinity of Office Depot, evidences authenticity, offers excellent as well as economical fare, and abounds with Hispanic men and women, suggesting endorsement by those most familiar with this cuisine tradition. Dave also directs our attention to an "establishment" on Old Hammond Highway between Millerville and Florida Boulevard that also is making exciting new contributions to the taqueria tradition. Thanks, Dave, for keeping the tortillas sizzling!

## ULM and Delta CC Lead Faculty Benefits Surge

Faculty statewide have been campaigning for years for more extensive tuition benefits for employees. From the northern part of our southern state comes a new reciprocal agreement between ULM and Delta Community College at a significantly reduced tuition rate. Applause is due to ULM President Nick Bruno and Delta Community College interim Czar Jerry Ryan for helping faculty use the educational resources that they create.

## Leadership Profile Fades Into Silhouette

Faculty advocates around the LSU System were hopeful when the LSU Board seemed poised to atone for avoidance of stakeholder input by requesting a "leadership profile" from faculty governance officials. Always ready to help and never short on suggestions, faculty governance folk responded with a detailed slate of qualifications for the next leader of the [LSU System](#), whether a freestanding System President or a combined President and Chancellor. At the top of the list of qualifications is an earned Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree along with a record of research and professional activity adequate for appointment as a full professor in an LSU System institution. Collateral qualifications include an understanding of the role of a university as a vehicle for the discovery of new knowledge and a readiness to work with K-12 educators to increase preparedness for college among Louisiana's youth. Having heard from search consultant Bill Funk that secrecy is fundamental to any search, however, the LSU Supervisors elected to keep these qualifications secret, excluding every last one of them from the call for applications that appeared in [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) and other outlets. When the "leadership profile" thus faded into a silhouette, it was shadowed by a residual advertisement that bundled together enigmatic mixed metaphors with hyperbolic affirmations: calls for "strategic vision" (a quality, the *Newsletter* supposes, somewhat like "musical hearing" or "aggressive smell"); for "exemplary interpersonal and communication skills" (of course, there are indeed plenty of ways to set an example, as we learned from Governor Edwards); for "unquestioned integrity" (easy enough to find when questions are limited to three-minute public comment segments); and for the ability to provide inspirational management of a multi-billion dollar enterprise" (a climactic phrase mixing evangelism with economic exaggeration). Even a silhouette, fortunately, has its functions; those old enough to remember Alfred Hitchcock Presents or to have heard about it from the new movie Alfred Hitchcock recognize the silhouette as the shadowy emblem of darkly comical perversities.



Hitchcock's Famous Silhouette:  
Icon of Dark Doings

## Fear the Hat or Fear the Fat?

As Louisiana's leading football team heads to a bowl game sponsored by one chicken sandwich chain under the guidance of a coach who promotes a rival chicken vendor and while sums equal to bowl earnings are spent in the subsidy of on-campus wellness programs that counteract bad diets, questions are bound to arise about the propriety of universities participating in events sponsored by firms that collaborate in the plumping and softening of American youth. Those tickled by the "Fear the Hat" campaign that presents LSU's football coach as a powerful icon of something-or-other might want to look at the nutrition data on [Cane's chicken](#), which disclose that those spicy fingers conceal a whopping 42% fat content—hardly a training-table item. By comparison, [Chick-fil-A](#) scores a 25% fat rating but nevertheless earns a D+ for overall nutritional efficacy. Evidence against hypocrisy will be in short supply until football officials affirm that they feed their players a diet of the sort that, at a handsome fee, they endorse for the cheering public.



Not Every White Cap Goes with  
the Good Guy.

## Public Art in University Building Owing to Shortage Of Bureaucrats: When We Love the One Percent

The greatest value in dignitary presentations at Faculty Senate meetings often arises from surprise discoveries only peripherally related to the intended topic. So it was that, during a team presentation by LSU Facilities Services head Tony Lombardo and his band of maintenance musketeers, a question emerged from LSU physicist and oceanographer Larry Rouse, who wondered about the one percent of the building costs that state law mandates for "public art." That sum should suffice to ornament most new academic buildings at a standard worthy of the Taj Mahal, yet most new buildings remain devoid of ornamentation, stark and austere at the very peak of their youthful beauty. It turns out that campuses are conserving this one percent allocation—it hasn't been spent or squandered—but that art projects funded by this resource require state approval. That approval has been indefinitely delayed owing to a lack of state officials to certify art. Let us pray for more art clerks "downtown" so that the art faculties around the state will not have to be consulted. Heaven knows that qualifications are the last thing that anyone wants to invoke.

## Tip of the Month: Money Soap

Looking for the ultimate stocking-stuffer for that gift recipient who is worn about by recession and eager for some—any—kind of emolument? Why not substitute an emollient emolument? Those who regard gambling as an unclean avocation will relish the invention of "money soap," a cleansing bar that contains, in its eery green glycerin confines, a negotiable bit of paper money. What's the gamble? The soap costs \$15.00, but the bar may contain a negotiable instrument of any sum, including the coveted \$50.00 bill (don't worry about that old joke about who's buried in Grant's tomb; Grant has been transferred to the cleaning department). Purchasers only discover the yield when they open the door to UPS and then collect their yield after they suds up. Grab a bar from the [Vermont Country Store](#) or the rival [Shelburne Country Store](#).



Money Soap

## ULM Billboard Triggers Pop-Up Debate

Louisiana is a place where ideological controversies images themselves in improbable contexts. One such venue is the environs of Egan, Louisiana, along Interstate 10, between exits 72 and 76. In what might be called the five-mile "Strip Strip," two adult book and video stores (including the tiger-rival "Lion's Den") vie for attention with an evangelical oil industry, Francis Drilling Fluids, which bedecks the ribbon of highway with a gigantic red lighted marquee that flashes non-stop moral and religious messages 24/7. Way back in the spring of 2011, this controverted road segment also hosted numerous billboards proclaiming the end of the world on 21 May 2011, per the prophesies of Reverend Harold Camping. Now a new billboard has popped up in this high-gain proclamation zone. The billboard announces the high-quality education and scintillating lifestyle available at the University of Louisiana in Monroe, which, indeed, has produced some of the finest faculty activists in Louisiana. A somewhat scratchy font suggests that the educational experience in Monroe will combine the ambience of an Oak Alley with the energy of a lightning bolt.



ULM Billboard Points Way  
to Lion's Den.

Demographic data on the inflow of inquirers from Egan remains likewise sketchy. The bold billboard, positioned deep within the recruiting territory of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, raised eyebrows during the recent University of Louisiana testimony day at the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, when committee members wondered aloud about the cost of aggressive competition among confederated campuses.

## Shreveport-Bossier Alliance Laying New Bets

An anonymous reader in Shreveport reports that the Shreveport-Bossier Alliance ("SBA"), which lost more than a little prestige following its failed push to conflate LSU in Shreveport with Louisiana Tech, is looking for new bets. With support outpacing programs to push, the SBA has thrown its support behind the doctor of nursing program at Northwestern State University, releasing a profuse [editorial](#) urging the University of Louisiana System to support a program that provides needed professionals to the northwestern region. Trouble is, there seems to be no opposition to this program; the outburst of support has triggered confusion comparable to that which would be merited by a fervidly insistent essay in favor of America, motherhood, and apple pie.

## Eternity Under the Goalpost

Those who maintain the lawn at Tiger Stadium may be chagrined to learn that the Last Judgment may perturb the evenly mowed gridiron surface. Tiger Athletic Foundation President General Ron Richard has received a mail-in proposal from a well-heeled fan for a mausoleum in Baton Rouge's legendary Death Valley. The *Newsletter*, having previously complained about the mediocre architecture of new structures on Louisiana campuses, is thus pleased to see that the A&M campus will soon rival the great Mausoleum of Helicarnassus when it comes to memorial architecture.



Scale Model Mausoleum at Helicarnassus

## THE GIRL (Julian Jarrold, 2012)

By Carl Freedman

More than 30 years after his death, Alfred Hitchcock continues to loom as large as any other filmmaker in the history of cinema; and so it is not particularly surprising that the current season brings not one but two biopics about him. I may well review Sacha Gervasi's *HITCHCOCK* (2012) in this space at a later date. Here I will focus on *THE GIRL*, the somewhat surprisingly titled (and slightly earlier) Hitchcock biography by the rather better known director Julian Jarrold (who is probably most renowned for *BECOMING JANE* [2007], a biopic about the young Jane Austen, and for his 2008 film version of Evelyn Waugh's classic modern novel, *BRIDESHEAD REVISITED*).

The girl of Jarrold's title is Tippi Hedren. Today she may be most famous as Melanie Griffith's mother, but for a relatively brief time in the 1960s she was—thanks mainly to Hitchcock—one of Hollywood's top stars. She played the female lead in two of his later films, *THE BIRDS* (1963), one of Hitchcock's major commercial and critical successes, and *MARNIE* (1964), which has generally been accounted a lesser effort, though in recent years some critics have begun to champion it too as a masterpiece. Hedren was working as a New York City fashion model when Hitchcock discovered her, and, as with several other of the director's famous "cool blondes," she was always more notable for her spectacular physical beauty than for her dramatic skills. In *THE GIRL*, she is played by Sienna Miller—a better actress than Hedren herself ever was, and no less beautiful—who convincingly represents Hedren as a normal, decent, tough-minded person who is at first naturally delighted to be starring in pictures by the world's most famous filmmaker, but who gradually learns, to her horror, that Hitchcock has cast her not only in his movies but also in his own creepy, possessive, and finally sadistic private fantasies.

It is interesting to watch Miller portray Hedren as an actress of modest talent but rock-solid strength and integrity, who resists and finally breaks decisively from the man who explicitly threatens to ruin her career and in the end does exactly that. But it is more than interesting—it is utterly, if horribly, fascinating—to watch Toby Jones as the evil and obsessive genius that was Hitchcock. Jones is one of the most underrated actors at work today, and he seems to have a special talent for making quite diverse real-life characters live on the screen: one might cite his turns as Karl Rove in *W.* (Oliver Stone, 2008), as Swifty Lazar in *FROST/NIXON* (Ron Howard, 2008), and, especially, as Truman Capote in *INFAMOUS* (Douglas McGrath, 2006), a performance that seems to me measurably superior even to Philip Seymour Hoffmann's Oscar-winning lead role in Bennett Miller's almost-contemporary *CAPOTE* (2005). But it is as Hitchcock that Jones gives what may be the best performance of his career so far. Without attempting the kind of impersonation that a stand-up entertainer might offer, he powerfully re-creates Hitchcock's iconic presence, particularly with regard to the deep, deliberate, and somehow always disturbing voice. Tippi Hedren herself—who was involved with, and generally approved, the making of *THE GIRL*—has said how startled she was by the realism of it all when she first heard Jones speak in character as Hitchcock.

Jones helps to make clear that Hitchcock's designs—on Hedren, on gorgeous young blondes in general, and perhaps, to some degree, on the world at large—are deeply sinister. But it is not always easy to say exactly what, in detail, the Master of Suspense is after. Though at one point he explicitly demands that Hedren make herself sexually available to him at all times and in any way he wishes, actual sexual intercourse does not really seem to be what he wants (in an unguarded moment, he comments that his wife Alma is the only woman with whom he's ever been to bed and that he is now impotent). It is control more than sex that has erotic value for Hitchcock. He wants to be able to manipulate every aspect of Hedren's existence, whether in relatively harmless (though still creepy and disturbing) ways—for example, he criticizes her fashion sense within seconds of first meeting her and goes on to seize control of every detail of her make-up, hair style, and wardrobe—or in ways that are clearly criminal. In the course of shooting *THE BIRDS*, Hitchcock subjects Hedren to five grueling days during which she is repeatedly pecked, bitten, scratched, and defecated on by actual live birds, though she had been promised that mechanical models would be used. At one point she nearly loses an eye to the avian assault. As his assistants on the set see clearly enough, what Hitchcock does to Hedren goes far beyond any artistic need. It is the exigencies not of moviemaking but of Hitchcock's own dark desires that require Hedren to be terrorized and humiliated, her nearly flawless white skin violated by innumerable bloody cuts and scratches. "Blondes make the best victims," as Hitchcock once said in a statement that Jarrold shrewdly uses as the film's epigraph. "They're like virgin snow that shows up the bloody footprints."

What are the origins of the Hitchcockian sadism? Jarrold's film does not offer a complete answer, but one possibility suggested is that Hitchcock's need for total corporeal control of others, especially of young and superlatively attractive women, may be rooted in a deep corporeal loathing of his own distinctly unattractive person. In a moment of drunken candor, he tells a handsome young male assistant that he would give everything—his money, his fame, his whole filmmaking career—just to be able to look like him (Hitchcock has been wounded by journalistic mockery of his personal appearance, which has been compared to a walrus dressed like a man, and to two balloons tied together).

Then too, we get some intriguing glimpses of Hitchcock's strange marriage. Alma Hitchcock (Imelda Staunton) is the third most important character in *THE GIRL*, and in some ways she is almost as weirdly fascinating as her husband. Alfred has no romantic interest in Alma, who quite lacks the glamor that so captivates him in Tippi and the other actresses he pursues; at the same time, not only is he completely dependent upon Alma emotionally, but she also seems to be the only person whose opinions on filmmaking matter to him (though Jarrold's movie never mentions it, Alma had more experience in the film industry than Alfred when the couple first met). Alma herself sometimes seems as dissatisfied as one might expect of a middle-aged wife whose husband is obsessed with a stunning actress less than half her age. More often, though, Alma appears as the enabler and even the organizer of her husband's obsessions. It is, in fact, Alma who first brings Tippi to Alfred's attention.

The final genius of Jarrold's film is that it is ultimately about something even more interesting than Alfred and Alma Hitchcock and the girl: namely, the cinematic oeuvre that Hitchcock has left behind. Jarrold has clearly studied these films with care and intelligence, and his own movie amounts to both a commentary on them and an addition to them. His imaginative re-creation of the shooting of *THE BIRDS* and *MARNIE* helps us to see how these movies are put together, for instance by making clear the way that Melanie Daniels (Hedren's character in *THE BIRDS*), who seems at first to be a jaunty heroine, is always destined to be a victim. There are also numerous briefer allusions to the Hitchcock canon, perhaps most memorably in a scene where Hedren, attempting to recover after the real-life bird attack, takes a shower.

(continued on page 5)

## Electronic Arts: No Seal Of Approval

The *Newsletter* has occasionally evidenced consanguinity with Ebenezer Scrooge by using the holiday season to question the relevance of Electronic Arts ("EA"), the video game maker and filler of stockings for screen-addicted scrollers, which will soon enjoy a multi-million dollar encampment on the LSU A&M landscape that drove the occupants of the AgCenter barn into internal exile, and which was billed to the LSU community as a driver in the modern arts and humanities. The glamor may be peeling off from "EA" in the post-Mark-Bissonnette era. *CNN* has cracked a story concerning the disciplining of seven Navy SEALs for disclosing classified material in exchange for consulting pay from EA, which sought to render its games more realistic without regard for the safety of military operatives.

## New Scanner Opens Vistas on North Louisiana

If it is true, as Dr. Johnson opines, that a lexicographer is merely a "harmless drudge," then surely we might extrapolate that the good doctor would regard modern archivists as charmless sludge. That faulty stereotype has been overturned by the LSU Shreveport Archives, a unit within the Noel Library. Under the guidance of archivist and occasional *Newsletter* columnist Laura McLemore, the LSUS archives has purchased, with a grant from The Noel Foundation, a high-tech scanner that will allow the speedy and high-resolution electronic preservation (and eventually distribution) of a large cache of rare documents and artful treasures, including antique maps, that pertain or that emerged from the greater northwest Louisiana region. McLemore's digital dazzler will produce image files in the multiple-gigabyte range, creating an electronic archive of unmatched quality and ensuring that the northwest corner of Louisiana's legacy will not only survive until but charge into the electronic future.

## Congratulations to David Manuel

The *Newsletter* strives to apportion not only blame but also praise—to applaud those who promote virtue as well as disrobe those in costume. So it is that we confer our congratulations on LSUA Chancellor David Manuel, who, in May, will dignify Drury University as its new President. Since 2010, David Manuel has provided the Louisiana Statewide Colleagues Collaborative and the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates with congenial meeting space, on the LSUA campus, for their quarterly joint meetings. Under his leadership, the LSUA campus has emerged as a nationwide center for faculty engagement, all while his campus has bagged landscape design awards, set new and high standards in academic architecture, and raced to the top of ratings among its peers. David Manuel epitomizes all that is good in Louisiana education. Catch the video of David's introduction to the [Drury Community online](#) (like a Division I football coach, David dons a new cap for the occasion). May David flourish among Missouri Methodists!



LSUA Chancellor David Manuel



## MOVIE REVIEW (continued)

Jarrold cunningly borrows several visual touches from the most famous shower in all of cinema, Janet Leigh's in *PSYCHO* (1960)—which is also, of course, an instance and emblem of feminine victimization. But the Hitchcock film with which *THE GIRL* establishes the deepest relation is without doubt *VERTIGO* (1958), which flopped in its own time but which many critics now rate as Hitchcock's supreme masterpiece (or even as the greatest movie ever made, as it was voted in the recent poll done by the British Film Institute). No other film so meticulously explores Hitchcock's great theme of how the desiring masculine subject can be driven to control and possess the desired feminine object. *THE GIRL*, I think, implicitly but convincingly presents itself as offering the biographical truth of the way that James Stewart, in *VERTIGO*, so eerily and disturbingly tries to take complete control of Kim Novak—though of course the dynamic that Jarrold shows between Hitchcock and Hedren resonates with the same theme as expressed in other Hitchcock films too. It is in this way that *THE GIRL* might almost be described as a Hitchcock film that the Master somehow "forgot" to make. If Hitchcock among the shades has maintained an interest in the film industry that he once dominated to a greater degree than perhaps any other particular director, he doubtless has found *THE GIRL* quite distasteful personally. But he cannot deny that this brilliant film is, in a fundamental sense, his own progeny.

—Carl Freedman

## LSU Budget and Planning Advisory Committee Resumes Operation

Faculty governance projects often falter under the pressure of fiscalphobia: the nagging fear among faculty members that they may not know all the factors involved in budgeting and therefore ought not to speak about institutional financial policy lest their ignorance be exposed. The complexity of modern university budgets creates a high bar to participation: the requirement that colleagues expend their valuable time in poring over thousands of lines of economic data. To remedy this problem and to encourage engagement in governance, the LSU Faculty Senate has reactivated its Budget and Planning Advisory Committee, the Chair of which is the ever-able Louay Mohammad. Louay and his committee have been charged specifically with developing easy-access and time-conserving educational materials by which faculty members may increase their competence in budgeting matters and may make informed contributions to the management of the money side of the university. Louay's committee will be preparing information resources aimed at colleagues who seek any of three levels of competence and engagement: beginners and educated university citizens; members of committees, senates, and other faculty governance units who wish to make informed comments or decisions; and experts who wish to address the budget directly, possibly as members of a budget committee. The work of this committee will be posted to the LSU Faculty Senate web site for the benefit of all colleagues in all institutions.



Louay Mohammad

## Purple Martin Spotted

Given that the end-of-the-world party scheduled for 21 December 2012 is nearly upon us, it is no surprise that unexpected events occur almost daily. These quasi-apocalyptic times have hosted two "sightings" that raise that least admirable but most productive of mental states, curiosity. In late October, formerly purple (and gold) LSU Chancellor Mike Martin was reportedly spotted in one of his former favorite off-campus social-business venues, The Londoner, a London-style pseudo-pub frequented mostly by those hankering to be photographed by society magazines. As is the case with most unidentified flying objects incidents, the citing of the migratory Martin was confirmed by only a few witnesses and remains unexplained and unproved (could it have been one of those lost-time, uncanny-transport moments that occur during abductions?). Even more astounding was the reconciliation scene at the October 26th Faculty Senate meeting, where restructuring critique and hospital-spinoff critic Kevin L. Cope was observed to shake hands and chat merrily with Minden medical maven Phillip Rozeman, with whom Cope had previously sparred over Rozeman's encouragement of a breakaway, independent LSUS—LaTech—LSUHSC-S university but with whom Cope apparently shares a common interest in fending off the zealous restructuring efforts by the LSU Board of Supervisors. Cope had previously associated Rozeman with the iconic Minden Gherkin pickle, the unlikely animated spokesman for that eponymously named German town, but apparently both Cope and Rozeman find that something is more sour in the state of Danos-mark.



Purple Martin

## University of Louisiana Chiefs Review Budget on Video

The complexity and the time required to understand academic budgeting is one of the most perplexing problems for practitioners of faculty governance. Thanks to the inquisitiveness of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, a cooperative panel of the Louisiana Senate and Louisiana House, those eager to understand the economic side of a gargantuan university system can do so with a four and one-half-hour video that features reports from nine University of Louisiana campus presidents and that begins with an easygoing but informative and focused system-wide overview report by the perennially charming Tom Layzell, interim President of the "U of L" System. The video includes a vast number of slides that cover everything from average faculty salary to capital outlay and the extenuation of restricted funds (in the video, one wise legislator must ask what "restricted funds" might mean). Viewers will learn about an invention called a "building use fee," which seems to open the possibility that some students might opt to take classes beneath a parasol. A litany of good news items from Layzell demonstrates that there is more than one hard-working system in the state. From Monroe reader Paul Sylvester comes a [link](#) to one of the most informative video resources since cathode ray tubes began shimmering. Thanks to President Layzell for making the complex accessible and the daunting at least assimilable.



Tom Layzell testifies to the JLCB

## Public Colleges From Private Pay Outs

Trinitarians need not blink at the mysteriousness of their doctrine if they can redirect their nervous eyes to Louisiana, where roles, ideologies, portfolios, and allegiances may change whenever an advocate moves from one office to another. Rivaling the claim by LSU System Shelby Mackenzie that LSU Interim President William Jenkins can change roles (from President to Chancellor and back again) whenever he steps over to or back from the LSU A&M campus is the activity of University of Louisiana Supervisor Jimmy Faircloth, Bobby Jindal's favorite go-to attorney, who, while serving as a Supervisor for the University of Louisiana System, which draws huge numbers of students from public K-12 education, also argued before the courts the Governor's case for the creation of a voucher system for K-12 education, a move that would undo a public education system that is justified by exactly the same rationale as is the University of Louisiana System, for which Faircloth advocates on his slow days.

## One-Candidate Searches Come in Numbers

One of the most curious articles of faith of the corporate world is the belief that only one candidate may be unveiled to the public. The most recent example of this latest version of American devotionism (in the guise of best practices) is the epiphany of an appointment of the new President of the University of Louisiana System. As usual, the LSU System is innovating by imitating and is not far behind in the race to close down options and to pull the latest highly paid rabbit out of the one-occupant hat. During a recent LSU System Board of supervisors meeting, Bill Funk, that slow-talking, Texas-based Matt Dillon of search consultants, mesmerized the ever-naive LSU Supervisors with the usual incantations: executive candidates are few in number; outing applicants reduces their mana on home campuses; reputations are so tender that no adequate candidate will apply if known to the public; cultivation of candidates is a proprietary process even more mysterious than the formula for Orville Redenbacher popcorn. What is omitted in such secular novenas, however, is that search consultants have an economic (and very non-public) interest in secrecy and in candidate pool minimalism. Secrecy allows search agents to control which candidates go where and who profits from placing them. One-candidate searches usually involve funding from private foundations, which further removes the search from the public eye and which introduces an additional non-public influence. Candidates who are so sensitive with regard to their reputations and their standing at home institutions are probably too weak—and too conniving—to behave responsibly in high office in public agencies. Fear for such candidates' careers is not supported by evidence, for exposure as a candidate usually results in a counter-offer and raise. The record of secret one-candidate searches in Louisiana has been abysmal, with the same Boards that insist a candidate is the answer to every problem insisting, only a few years later, that someone fire the (expletive deleted) "problem."



## Lifestyle Feature: Eddies In The Stream: Acoustic Internet Channels

Since the invention of the knob, conventional, over-the-air radio has been all about volume, whether the clanging barrage of top 40, rock, and modern country hits that fill most of the airwaves or the big symphonic pieces that fill the hours on the occasional classical channels (think 1812 Overture). Inadequate to the selling of advertisements, the acoustical offerings that delight connoisseurs have been relegated by FM and AM radio to slots on Sunday morning or feast day afternoons. The emergence of internet radio has breathed new life into non-electronic oscillations, if only because no one needs to listen to an internet channel, there being tens of thousands of hobbyists seemingly willing to upload their favorite tunes into the unoccupied ether. Recent estimates indicate that 30,000 or more internet radio stations are currently streaming around the clock, many of them to a handful of devotees. Owing to the profusion of stations as well as the need for tuneful moments during the holiday season, the *Newsletter* is pleased to offer a beginner's guide to the most listenable stations on the internet (many stations offer specialist musical canons, but, then, can one really listen to technopop percussion twenty-four hours per day?). Three categories—classical, jazz, and folk—are addressed, with one lagniappe offering for the holiday season. All of these stations may be accessed via a search engine hunt for the station name followed by the activation of "listen" buttons on the selected site. Those who have internet radios or internet receivers attached to their high fidelity systems may find these e-broadcasters by following the usual procedures for their device.

Among the stations offerings "classical" music (including Baroque and other early music), the undisputed long-running champion and sure bet for the holidays is *AVRO Baroque around the Clock*. Beamed from the Netherlands and completely commercial and commentary free, *Baroque around the Clock* provides a huge range, with minimal repetition, of Baroque, small ensemble fare. Better—if your system and internet link can manage it—Baroque around the Clock transmits at a high-resolution 256 kilobytes per second, providing a depth and quality and sound nearly equal to CDs and DVDs. Those who are looking for earlier music might try *A Treasury of Early Music*, which radiates from Spain. *The Treasury* includes in its deposits a rich store of medieval and early Iberian compositions as well as numbers from the near east, although its low-resolution 32 kbps transmission rate sometimes makes the station sound as if it were buried beneath an ancient catacomb. A promising newcomer now rising over the horizon is Canada's *Ancient FM*, a fresh, lively, and diverse electronic audio anthology that is subsidized by contributors and that transits from the earliest medieval through the most complex Renaissance music. *Ancient FM* is distinguished by its willingness to play the full range of non-symphonic ancient instruments, whether buzzing krummhorns or mellow sackbuts or screeching hurdy-gurdies.



Fans of "serious" acoustical music can easily locate a number of stations that attend to the contributions of a favorite instrument or composer and that include in their repertory sufficient items to keep the repetition cycle above three or four days. Woodwind enthusiasts will exhale a cry of joy over *Calm Radio: Flute*, which sojourns over the entire flute repertory and which, in its commitment to pure columns of tonic air, maintains a lightness of touch even when playing heavy nineteenth-century blockbusters. *Calm Radio*, unfortunately, is a commercial venture. After every second piece, a chiming voice appears begging listeners to subscribe and suggesting, in a bizarre medical move, that listening to *Calm* channels may cure ringing in the ears. Competing with *Calm Radio: Flute* is German musical equipment merchant *Recorder-Radio.com*, which features the music of pre-modern flutes such as recorders and the instruments of indigenous peoples. *Recorder-Radio.com* is delightfully fresh and exhilaratingly windy but has some technical problems to address, including poor volume regulation that allows tender recorder lullabies to segue into screaming German-language advertisements and also including an occasional irrelevant selection from 1970s pop music. Multi-channel provider 181 FM also provides a nerve-soothing *Classical Guitar* channel, although that formerly uninterrupted channel now begins transmitting occasional advertisements and channel identifiers after the first hour of listening. With regard to particular artists, one of the most refreshing channels is multi-channel provider Abacus FM's Vivaldi, which plays the spritely productions of that Italian master and that, save for the occasional channel identifier, leaves one feeling that one is living happily on the produce aisle in The Fresh Market, where similar tracks perpetually play.



A few full-service "classical" channels evidence enough focus and character to merit occasional listening. *Venice Classic* is a veritable "room with a view," playing lyrical and lovely songs, chamber music, and opera excerpts and creating an ambience of easygoing sophistication in any room that it fills. Neglected *Catalunya Música* offers

not only the usual classical works but an admixture cinematic program pieces that conjure the image of knights errant galloping across the Spanish plains. Germany's *HR2* (a unit of Hessische Rundfunk) provides an excellent mix of music and commentary on it as well as the rock-solid news coverage that has always been the hallmark of German broadcasting.

Despite the Christmas story having taken place on dry lowlands, the holiday season continues to draw its imagery from Alpine environments. Most of the acoustic folk music channels on the internet focus on the scales of the high hills; doubtless, more channels are in preparation, but a preponderance of current providers incline toward mountain music. A previous issue of the *Newsletter* has lauded *247polkaheaven.com*, which continues to pump out the prancing rhythms of the central and northern European highlands; those seeking an even more elevating experience should visit *Austria's Radio Volksmusik*, which has lately been re-flagged as [www.radio-blasmusik.at](http://www.radio-blasmusik.at), to hear the echoes reverberating through the blue skies over Alpenland. *Radio Volksmusik* might be characterized as the oral equivalent of a scoop of *Obatzda*: a hearty and aromatic evocation of the upland. Europe is not the only venue in which the hills are alive with the sound of music. Bluegrass has already permeated the internet. Surprisingly, multi-channel provider 181 FM offers one of the best all-around bluegrass smorgasbords. Its *Bluegrass Front Porch* covers the spectrum of traditional and modern bluegrass, creating continual interest through the juxtaposition of old-fashioned pickin' against the slightly more cerebral commentaries of modern minstrels. Those hankering after a "pure" bluegrass experience should give a listen to *Sugar in the Gourd*, which, in said gourd, serves not only bluegrass but a mix of the old-timey folk singers and collectors, whether Elizabeth Cotton or Alan Lomax. (continued on page 7)



## Architectural Inversion Vaults McNeese Into Foreground

An odd inversion characterizes the public arts in Louisiana: the more powerful and influential the institution, the worse the architecture; the greater the challenges an institution faces, the greater the innovation in the building arts. So it is that LSU, with its spate of new buildings that all resemble an exploded diagram of the historic quadrangle, continues to run forward by looking back; so it is that little McNeese has emerged as the Goliath of Louisiana architecture, most recently with its soaring if somewhat underused arts and performance center and now with two ventures into the outdoor arts. The first of the ventures, the SEED center, an idea incubator and think tank, is taking a form, the heritage of which lies somewhere between the Bauhaus and the Ikea showroom, thus bringing long-awaited modernity and visual relief to Ryan Street, a campus-defining boulevard that has long marred the university "look" with a series of bars and lounges sporting monikers such as "Kahuna's." The second, less obvious innovation is the new McNeese parking structure, the near-heroic pillars of which feature molded concrete evocations of the uplifted McNeese torch, as if McNeese were at once burning ignorance off its grounds while warming the air in the uplifting balloon of knowledge. Let's send some of the architects on other Louisiana campuses out to Lake Charles for a lesson or two!

## Old Man River Overtakes Mississippi Money Men

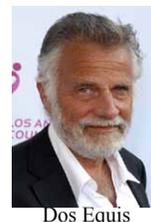
The *Newsletter* has long opined that the educational initiatives in the central part of the state, whether the long-running "Alexandria Summit Meetings" or the poorly publicized activities of the Learning Center of Rapides Parish or the enterprises of Louisiana Tech, not only deserve more attention but demonstrate that towns other than Baton Rouge can offer input and answers. Now one mega-money-man from Alexandria, LSU Supervisor Blake Chatelain, CEO of Red River Bank, has catapulted from his Kisatchie-supported perch into the upper reaches of Baton Rouge banking with the announcement of the acquisition, by Red River Bancshares, of Fidelity Bank of Baton Rouge and its holding company. The *Newsletter* welcomes this instance of economic reciprocity, which should create a geographically expansive watershed in which not only economic but intellectual energy can flow from some of the higher ground in our state

## Red River Radio Promotes Commitment Plan

Those who doubted that humble academic dabblers could create public support for inter-campus programs have been disproved by supporters of the Shreveport "Commitment Plan" created by under-appreciated former LSU System chief John Lombardi, who have recruited radio stations KDAQ, KLSA, and the entire Red River Radio network into the promotion of the north-south two-campus engineering programs that coordinate the efforts of LSUS and LSU and that are key to the Lombardi-engendered plan. On a recent trip up I-49, a *Newsletter* staffer heard non-stop public service announcements for this increasingly popular avenue into the engineering career. Special congratulations are also due to LSU Engineering's Rick Koubek, whose patient stewardship of this program helped Shreveport colleagues regain control over and attract new clientele for their laudable programs..

## LIFESTYLE (continued)

The glum have declared jazz a geriatric taste, yet internet jazz streaming sources number over 500. One of the most lenitive, with regard to the jangled nerves of the aging professional set, is *Dinner Jazz Excursion*, a perfect condensation of every mood experienced in every cocktail lounge of bistro or penthouse apartment between the youth of Hugh Hefner and the conception of the Dos Equis beer “most interesting man in the world” advertising campaign. Nothing goes with a slice of quiche and a sip of soup like this channel. Those seeking a more angular experience ought to hook up with the two piano offerings from online jazz giant JazzRadio (which, alas, is distributing an increasing number of advertisements): *JazzRadio Piano* and *JazzRadio Piano Trios*. These intensely asymmetric electronic grooves will continually challenge the ear and offset the intellect with an endless array of aural inquisitions. Equally incisive yet easy on the ear are two other JazzRadio venues: *JazzRadio Gypsy* and *JazzRadio Paris*. Both of these will hurl the hearer back into the golden age not only of jazz, but of modernism. Only a click of the internet radio button is required to re-enter the world of beatniks, experimental fiction, and maybe even Julia Child. The curatorial internet likewise sustains the great traditions of jazz; multi-channel providers such as Abacus FM and Boston Pete provide a platform on which an assortment of amateurs may fill the hours with *Vintage* jazz (a title that appears on both platforms).



Dos Equis

Every year, the internet streaming community commissions a squadron of Christmas music channels, and so it is that old-timey jazz takes on a new life during a time of the year that mixes merriment with occasional moroseness. Twentieth- and twenty-first century Christmas tunes specialize in a kind of dreary moaning and groaning that seems in odd contrast to the alleged joy of the season. Nothing could be more dispiriting than yet another rendition of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. Fortunately, jazz channels such as 181 FM's *Christmas Swing* set the tempo for an upbeat holiday experience, re-introducing the clarity that characterized the auditory experience of the holidays before 101 Strings filled every tune with rumbling cello groans. *Christmas Swing* brings both peppy twentieth-century renderings of cheerful Christmas tunes along with witty modern deconstructions of the Christmas song canon.

Enjoy, and have yourself a jazzy little Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa!

## TRSL: Employee Retirement to Plunge Again In FY 2014

The retirement plan used by over half of current professional employees and over eighty percent of new hires took yet another turn for the worse as the Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana (“TRSL”) quietly announced the contribution and transfer rates for fiscal year 2014 (which runs from July 1st, 2013 until June 30th, 2014). The Optional Retirement Plan (“ORP”) has never been satisfactory, but at its best, in 1988, employees and employers together contributed 24.5% of salary, of which 14.93% reached employee accounts. In 2009, the contribution and transfer rate took a turn for the worse, with only 13.66% of the total contribution reaching employee accounts. In the current year, employees and employers together contribute a whopping 32.4%, of which a paltry 13.64% reaches employee accounts. The *Newsletter* has learned that, in the next fiscal year, the combined contribution rate may soar to nearly 35% while the sum reaching employee accounts will sink to circa 13.2%. Of that amount, nearly 27% will come from employers, of which only 5.18% will reach employees. The deep plunge in benefits is caused by the explosive growth of the unfunded accrued liability, which was imposed on ORP participants at the inception of the plan despite ORP participants having generated no previous costs. TRSL collects large sums from ORP contributions which it then uses to pay down the debts created by another, defined-benefit plan from which ORP members receive no benefit and on the administration of which they are not allowed to vote. The LSU Faculty Senate web site includes a large menu of information regarding the [retirement plan disaster](#).

## A G Answers

“A G Answers” is your newest source of human resources management advice. LSU HRM Chief A. G. Monaco addresses *Newsletter* readers' questions about HRM and “employees' lives.” in general. Have a pressing HRM issue for A G to address? Please send your queries to [encope@LSU.edu](mailto:encope@LSU.edu).

This month's query comes from Mary, a reader in Eunice, Louisiana, who asks:

Dear AG,

“Why are there two retirement “systems,” one that requires vesting and allows pre-retirees to participate in DROP, and one that doesn't? Isn't this a violation of the Equal Protection clause? Has there been a legal case involving what seems to be unequal (and unfair) treatment of people planning to retire? For those considering an offer of employment, if the options are clearly explained at hiring (including Louisiana's opting out of Social Security), both “systems” should dissuade older faculty from accepting appointments at LSU, and that is something I'm sure we want to avoid, particularly if we're looking for ‘stars.’” —Mary in Eunice

Dear Mary,

There are in total four statewide, public employee retirement systems, each administered by its own separate board of trustees. For higher education, most employees are eligible for membership in either the Louisiana State Employees Retirement System (LASERS) or the Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL). Classified state employees are generally members of LASERS while faculty and professional staff are usually eligible for membership in TRSL. For TRSL eligible employees there is a choice—the traditional defined benefit plan, or as an alternative, the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP). The reason for the development of the ORP is most likely the result of demand by state universities to offer a plan that allows immediate vesting and portability.

Those two factors are of great importance in higher education because it allows for faculty in particular to be recruited from both private and public universities and allows immediate vesting to those concerned about attaining tenure. While LASERS most recently has been confined to covering classified (civil service) employees on our campuses there are still non-classified professionals and some faculty that are members of LASERS. (continued on page 8)



A G Monaco

## LSU Transition Advisory Team, Presidential Search Committee Bypass Faculty, Minimize Diversity

Masquerade is a genre encompassing more than Mardi Gras. Under pressure from the faculty, the LSU Board of Supervisors indicated that it would include “faculty” on its presidential search committee. And that it did—without consulting any identifiable person and without any procedure that would include the elected faculty leadership of any of the LSU System campuses. All the more remarkable is its selection of “faculty” who are present and former administrators and who have never been elected to faculty governance offices. Meanwhile, the unnamed oracles at the LSU System office created a “Transition Advisory Team” for a restructuring that is allegedly still under debate, staffing that team with nothing but senior men (save for one woman who belongs to the Flagship Coalition) and not including a single faculty, staff, or student member.

## Saints Come Marching Back In

That old tune, *When the Saints Go Marching In*, reminds everyone of the common human desire “to be in that number” of those ranked among the included and redeemed. Several schools around Louisiana have fallen into the awkward habit of dropping the most experienced members of the academic cadre from the directory at the moment of their retirement. As soon as the gold watch was collected, the expiration date on directory listing concluded. Thanks to the heroic efforts of LSU IT Service chief Brian Nichols, retirees at LSU and many LSU System schools have returned to the directory, where seekers after professional experience can locate them with the click of a mouse. Loud applause is due to Brian for his redemption of our previously abandoned elder professionals.

Gloria B	English	Retired faculty
Lawrence A	English	Retired faculty
Michael	Audubon Sugar Inst	Retired faculty
Evelyn Kees	LSU Alexandria	Retired faculty

## Frown, You're on Candid Camera

The old nostrum that it is a good idea to see oneself as others see one could be well applied to what was perhaps the most peculiar spectacle of the autumn semester. In front of a standing-room-only crowd that had come to protest the consolidation of the LSU System Presidency and the LSU System Chancellorship as well as to voice its opposition to unconsidered restructuring schemes, LSU's CEO, accompanied by the Board that can readily fire any Chancellor, asked each and every campus Chancellor or Director to explain what he (and it is always a “he”) thought about the restructuring plan and what he thought he could do to help the plan (which plan was allegedly still under debate). We leave it to readers to judge whether the proverbial spectator from the planet Mars, looking down on this quaint evocation of the kissing of the Papal ring, would imagine that the Chancellors and Directors revealed their true thoughts. We do know that the folks in the audience were quietly laying bets as to which Chancellors were “in” or “out” and had concluded that the length of the speech was a good “metric” for the survivability of the campus CEO (the shorter being the better, with LSU A&M achieving the peak of strategic brevity with the opinion that “we've got a lot of work to do”).



## ASK A G (continued)

These are folks with many years of University service. Effective July 1, 2013 (absent some court rulings) there will be two additional plans in place within higher education—LASERS will add a Cash Balance Plan and TRSL will do the same for new employees hired after 7/1/2013 in higher education.

One might question why the state would choose to multiply the overhead for providing state pensions and not attempt to benefit from the economies of scale that one large pension fund might provide. While government does a number of things well (and I am sure there are people with strong arguments in favor of why there should be so many state pensions with different designs) I believe that political and social considerations are a factor in developing multiple plans and they will at times supplant sound business logic or available economies of scale.

So, Mary, in answering your question regarding why there are multiple retirement systems I would answer by quoting Milton Friedman - "Nobody spends somebody else's money as wisely as he spends his own." (Those more inclined to favor the Keynesians over the Chicago School need not send me letters attacking my use of a Friedman quote. Keynes, Samuelson, and Galbraith have made similar observations though not as succinctly.) In effect the State has not done a very good job of managing its pension plans and is playing catch-up financially.

Now regarding your point about one pension plan allowing some members participation in the Deferred Retirement Optional Plan (DROP) while not allowing ORP members to do the same:

TRSL and LASERS both allow for members of its defined benefit plans to enter into DROP. Participants in the TRSL administered ORP do not have this option because by design a defined contribution plan does not allow for a guaranteed level of benefit.

DROP allows a retirement plan member who is eligible for retirement to have their regular monthly retirement benefit deposited into a separate account at TRSL or LASERS while the employee continues to work. Participation in DROP requires that you specify how long you wish to participate. It can range from one month to two or three years. The idea is that employee will build up a tax deferred "nest egg" in addition to their retirement benefit. Additionally during DROP your take home pay may increase since neither you or the University would be making contributions to your pension. The catch is that should you receive a pay increase while in DROP your pension will not be impacted as the final average compensation figure used in the formula to calculate monthly benefit is "frozen" when you enter DROP. Participating in DROP should be carefully considered since you may receive a larger retirement benefit if you continue working and do not enter DROP. HRM recommends that employees particularly TRSL members discuss all the options with a benefits consultant at the University prior to entering DROP.

The new retirement benefit design set to go into effect on July 1, 2013 known as the Cash Balance Plan will not offer an opportunity to enter into DROP. The new Cash Balance Plan is a hybrid defined contribution plan that limits the state's costs and limits the members possible losses but does not calculate benefits in a manner whereby an employee can utilize DROP.

Regarding the matter of the equal protection under the law I am not qualified to provide legal advice. Sometimes we are the victims of things that are incorrect, unfair, or just dumb but they are not necessarily illegal.

As we work together to improve compensation and pensions for all employees at LSU we need to focus on the causes of the problems.

One big cause is underfunding of higher education and in my opinion another is an administration of our pension benefits by TRSL that exhibits a negative bias toward higher education employees. This year our campus is being charged more than 27 million dollars for unfunded accrued liabilities for ORP pension members despite the fact that they are not creating any of the liability. Next fiscal year higher education will reduce the creation of pension liabilities by instituting the new Cash Balance Option thus requiring all new TRSL eligible employees on our campus to choose either the Cash Balance Plan or ORP. Unlike higher education employees the new TRSL members who work in K-12 will still have access to the traditional and more expensive to administer defined benefit plan. The result will be that even more money will be shifted by TRSL out of LSU's budget to underwrite the pensions of other employees at other agencies.

The most important thing one can do to plan for retirement is to spend time studying and discussing the pension plan you are covered under. The personnel working in HRM on our campus are always willing to assist you with collecting the information you need to become fully aware of your pension benefits.—A G



## Introduction to the BAM Show on KSLU

Dayne Sherman

December 7, 2012



As a person with longstanding rural ties, I've always been interested in old-time and bluegrass music. Though it is possible that my own songwriting, singing, and guitar playing are grounds for termination from my job as an associate professor, I haven't allowed a lack of talent to prevent me from strumming my old guitar.

As a result of my love for old-time roots music, I've started a new public radio show called "BAM: Bluegrass and More." My friend and co-host is Dan "Buddha" Hildenbrandt, a Kentuckian currently teaching communication studies at Southeastern in Hammond.

The hour-long BAM program will air each Sunday from 5-6 PM on KSLU 90.9 FM. The inaugural program will begin on January 6, 2013. I will sing an original Louisiana murder ballad titled "Leon Terrebbonne" for the first show. Listeners can tune in live or through the Internet at [kslu.org](http://kslu.org).

As the show progresses, we will have live recordings of guest artists, and the program will be available on iTunes for download. With luck, we may even syndicate the program to other radio stations.

Listen in and let me know what you think.



—Dayne Sherman

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# JOIN LSUNITED TODAY

## WHO WE ARE:

LSUnited is the higher education organizing committee of the Louisiana State University faculty and is affiliated with the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE), the largest and most influential association of professional educators in the state, with more than 20,000 members.

## OUR GOALS:

The Louisiana higher education community is at a crossroads, and LSUnited is organizing to become a powerful voice for educators at Louisiana State University. We strive for a shared vision and collaborative governance for all faculty members.

- **JOB SECURITY** – Address concerns and issues with the administration and oversight boards
- **FAIR PAY** – Develop a clear means of negotiating pay systems that are equitable, justly applied, and transparent
- **BENEFIT PROTECTIONS** – Protect and improve benefits in health insurance, retirement, employer contribution rates, and faculty options
- **A VOICE ON THE JOB** – Establish policies, procedures, and protocols for better decision making in the work environment
- **SHARED GOVERNANCE** – Engage in collective advocacy and exercise our historical right of self-determination

**LSUnited**

A Vital LSU! A Vital Community!

Need more info? Contact us at  
[LSUNITED@LIVE.COM](mailto:LSUNITED@LIVE.COM)  
OR VISIT [LAE.ORG](http://LAE.ORG)

