

12-2013

## Faculty Senate Newsletter, December 2013

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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### Recommended Citation

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, "Faculty Senate Newsletter, December 2013" (2013). *Newsletter*. Paper 31.  
<http://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/senate-pubs/31>

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

# LSU FACULTY SENATE

Monthly Newsletter

December 11, 2013

## *President's Welcome*



Discussion of higher education policy today takes place in the language or practicality: of productivity, of graduation targets, and of workforce development. Yet politics, even of the most pragmatic variety, is compounded as much of speculation and fantasy as of data, experience, or "reality." Policy discussions quickly turn from what is to what should be. For decades—since the heyday of

Margaret Thatcher—privatization has been heralded by "the silent majority" as the best way to increase efficiency. In academe, the twentieth-century dream of a lean, dynamic government has expressed itself in a faith in production line metrics such as retention rates or baccalaureate conferral numbers or in the fervid belief that universities should rely on self-generated revenues, whether derived from tuition, from philanthropy, from "F&A" charges on grants and contracts, or from winnings in the bingo hall. Like most movements, the drive to minimize state appropriations to higher education institutions showcases a "poster child" or two, usually campuses such as Michigan or Virginia, where state contributions have sunk to single-digit percentages.

As God would love a repentant sinner if one could be found, so clear-thinking professionals would applaud a prosperous, purely private institution if one could be located. Even if one sets aside the obvious distortion in the "self-generated funds" scenario—that most institutions, whether public or private, rake in public funds from a variety of government sources, whether federally managed loans and financial aid or from state-funded scholarship programs such as Louisiana's TOPS—there is still much to suggest that the privatization is a pipe dream.

Advocates for privatization and for self-generated funding imagine that private money is 100% efficient. They forget about the gigantic, costly apparatus required to operate funding programs. Depending on how one reckons it, Louisiana boasts more than three dozen campuses. Each of those institutions maintains at least one foundation; medium and large institutions host as many as five foundations, each serving different constituencies, whether wealthy industrialists or sports boosters. Colleges, departments, and programs often enough have their own campaign leaders, as do research and economic development units. In the amalgam, these 24/7 philanthropy machines employ hundreds of highly paid professionals, all at a staggering cost. Also resisting calculation is the total philanthropic potential of either Louisiana or America. It would take a strong libertarian imagination to conjecture that voluntary philanthropy in a thinly populated state such as Louisiana (or Wyoming or Vermont or most anywhere else other than California or New York) could support multitudinous campuses by gathering scattered contributions.

In need of assessment are the intellectual and cultural consequences of dependence on the various forms of self-generated or otherwise private funding. The big block of money gathered from tuition buffers the ups and downs of private giving and grantsmanship. Not all campuses, however, enroll students. Fine research institutions such as the Pennington Biomedical Research Center suffer disproportionately from oscillations in granting and giving. The most advanced research thus stands in the most severe jeopardy, with risk becoming the most reliable fact of high-tech life. Similarly, the need to maintain the "F&A" (facilities and administration) funding flow eventually proves counter-productive as institutions discourage the pursuit of alternative funding sources that pay low surcharges and encourage an often vain hunt for a finite pool of federal dollars, which come with higher supplements. Institutions also tend to conduct research in areas that fit the philanthropic delusions of donors—the "I can cure world hunger in the same way that I struck it rich" fantasy. On the other side of the research and teaching spectrum, the need to maintain the aforementioned buffer of tuition money creates an apparatus for the recruitment and retention of students that is nearly as massive as that dedicated to fundraising. Hence the "climbing wall debacle," in which nearly every institution in America caters to current student taste by constructing costly rock-climbing walls in recreation centers, only to create work for the climbing wall demolition crews of the year 2025, when the fad will have passed (remember the parkour course?).

Academic people need to speak out for public funding of universities, perhaps through the "block grant" method that seems to appeal to the current generation of post-neo-conservatives. A block grant could be used more flexibly than all the solicited funds with all their restrictions. Given the reluctance of legislators to support institutions outside of their districts and given the fear and trembling in which state-appointed administrators must live, an eligible approach would be a statewide referendum on the funding of higher education. If only owing to shame, few would vote against such a measure. Another thought experiment might involve questioning the linkage between university appointments and teaching. Many fine institutions employ professionals such as artists-in-residence, whose contribution is measured in quanta other than student credit hours but who usually attract large audiences. Disconnecting faculty from traditional faculty-to-student or faculty-to-class-hours ratios would help return attention to the use of money for academic and research purposes rather than for maintaining enrollment rates.

Whatever solutions might be proposed, it is time to call the question: does the public want to fund cultural, educational, and research institutions and is private funding really lucrative for universities or only for the bureaucracy that manages it?

## **DRAFT RETIREMENT LEGISLATION PROPOSES ORP FLOOR**

Since its inception, the *Newsletter* has been advising faculty concerning strategies for dealing with the alarming inadequacies of the retirement plan. Not only faculty but also top-level administrators—who, after all, are retirement plan participants and who lose more than anyone else to the devastations of the unfunded accrued liability—have been shocked into faster action by the new actuary's [report](#) that recommends the reduction of the "normal cost"—that portion of the employer contribution that reaches employee accounts—to a miserly 3.66%. Now, from an anonymous source deep within higher education management, the *Newsletter* has obtained a draft of proposed legislation that would set a floor to the normal cost contribution for participants in the Optional Retirement Plan ("ORP"). The draft, which can be viewed [online](#), allows systems or campuses to add an unspecified percentage of pay to the aforementioned contribution. The *Newsletter* finance bureau is vigorously calling on *all* university system presidents to support such legislation vigorously and to avoid calling for the kind of "flexibility" that balances budgets by clipping employee compensation packages. The draft legislation is in search of a sponsor; faculty governance personnel are engaged in talks.

## **KAPTAIN CREATIVITY WORKSHOP DRAWS KUDOS**

Faculty in most campuses lament the growth of the administration. In Louisiana, where the machinery of campus management has been drained and depleted for years, colleagues welcome administrative expansion in under-served areas. The elevation of Larry Kaptain to campus-wide Director of Creative Initiatives at LSU A&M has already borne fruit. Kaptain recently staged a workshop of interdisciplinarity that featured internationally acclaimed creativity consultant Elizabeth Long Lingo, who has masterminded creativity initiatives at prestigious campuses such as Vanderbilt and Temple. Lingo, whose TedX performance can be viewed on [YouTube](#), offered two "SRO" workshops in which colleagues from across fields performed concentrated exercises intended to promote the crossing of intellectual, artistic, and administrative borders. Participants included geophysicists, opera stars, prominent arts deans, administrators, chemists, students, and more! Unrelenting applause is due to Larry for showing us how to re-fuse the arts and sciences. The world awaits the next performance!

# Higher Education Headliner

## Thomas Sofranko, Associate Dean of the College of Art and Design

By Daniel Board and Emily Ward

This month's Higher Education Headliner is Thomas Sofranko, going on year six as Associate Dean of the College of Art and Design. Dean Sofranko was raised in Ohio but spent most of his summers in Panama City which connected him to the gulf region. He received both his bachelors and his masters from Kent State University. After he graduated from Kent State, he began teaching studios in the Cleveland area while looking for teaching jobs preferably in a warmer climate. It was in the fall of 1992 that he came to Baton Rouge and LSU. We were curious as to what Dean Sofranko's job entailed. There are two important aspects to his job; he works with the councilors of the college to settle issues such as grade appeals and petitions, and on the curriculum side he works with the directors and departments on curriculum development as well as assisting with assessment ensuring that individual units are assessing themselves correctly.

There are four different units that make up the School of Art and Design, and Dean Sofranko is tenured in the architecture department. In the past, he has taught design studios that are geared towards first year design students which he explains, "is a particular area of interest, and it's somewhat unique in that it's not a continuation of anything the students have been doing in high school, so it introduces them to a brand new world." Dean Sofranko also ran a summer camp which was designed to attract high school students not only to the field of architecture but also to LSU. He has since passed his duties with the camp on to others but iterated that the experience was fun and students are excited to get to be on campus, living in the dorms and eating their meals in the dining halls with fellow students. We wondered if the summer camp had caused any increase in the architecture student body or even the school's student body. He explained that because architecture is a studio based education there is not any physical way to increase studio size which generally runs between 10 to 15 students. In order to add more students there would need to be more studios and faculty. With this he reiterates that there are recruiting duties that comprise part of his job; such as times when he goes to fairs in order to recruit. There are always more students that want into the program than there are places for them; however, by keeping the size of the student body where it is now, the department can more effectively cultivate their talents.

One of the projects Dean Sofranko has worked on during his time with the School of Art and Design has been Selective Admissions which was first spearheaded in his very own department. Sofranko spent time working on the logistics of doing this with the director. Very recently, he and the director have put in a proposal that was approved to start operating under Direct Admissions. This means that students won't be in UCFY (Center for Freshman Year) in their first year. He explains that even though first year students may have identified a major, they are not really in that major their first year but rather in UCFY. The issue with UCFY is that often students do not realize until later in their education what their area of study will actually require in terms of the types of subjects they will need to study. The idea is to get a hold of these students earlier in their college careers so that they become aware of and can make an informed decision to stick with the program or to change to something more suitable to their interests. Implementation of Direct Admissions will also simplify confusions younger students sometimes encounter by having too many advisors. Sofranko hopes that this new style will increase incoming student interaction with his department, subsequently promoting a level of comfort and sense of purpose not witnessed before.



Associate Dean Thomas Sofranko

"I see these administrative roles as behind-the-scenes and I take great satisfaction in the success of the folks I work with."

## PARKING FEES SKYROCKET AT A&M

Spurred by faculty governance activist and traffic management hobbyist Suresh Rai, the LSU Faculty Senate has probed the economics of faculty parking fees. An economic sanction for the misdeed of coming to work, university parking fees stand out in a Louisiana work environment in which employee free parking is the norm. It now comes to light that faculty members at the A&M campus fork over \$500.00 per year for parking that can be accessed only forty hours per week and that is inaccessible during football games while students pay \$165.00 per year for parking that is available 24/7. 30,000 students contribute \$4.5M to parking revenue while faculty, who comprise only 4% of the parking population, contribute \$1.7M to parking revenues, a whopping 27% of the total burden. The low parking fees play a role in the new campaign to present LSU as "affordable"—but it seems that this affordability requires confiscation of hard-earned faculty salary.



Parking activist Suresh Rai

## SCROOGE-FREE CFCU WELCOMES REVELERS

The credit unions that serve Louisiana higher education, of which Campus Federal Credit Union is the largest, continue to demonstrate excellence not only in community (or sector-based) banking but also through their inventive magnanimity. The latest in a long litany of good deeds is the "Christmas Open House" at Campus Federal Credit Union that is slated for December 11th and that includes a free lunch (note: experienced academics know that CFCU provides some of the best catering between Caddo and Bel Chasse). The CFCU Christmas bash takes on a special, wistfully celebratory note through its correlation with the retirement of long-serving John Milazzo, a virtuous son of Napoleonville who has headed the CFCU longer than two naps by the seventeen-year locust and who has lifted his institution to heights never even imagined by its founders. As the Christmas open-house proves, Milazzo has always been number-one among anti-Scrooge antidotes. We wish John a happy, prosperous, and above all fun retirement and we applaud him for gifting the community with a fine celebration as he moves into a dynamic post-career phase!

### Holiday LUNCH BUFFET

December 9-19, 2013  
10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

\$19.95 per person

*The Club*  
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Formerly the LSU Faculty Club  
[www.TheClubatLSU.com](http://www.TheClubatLSU.com)

Prime Rib Carved with Horseradish Cream and Au Jus. Leg of Lamb with Rosemary and Garlic. Boudin Stuffed Chicken Breast. Spinach Sagna. Duck Rouleades with Brandy. Cheesecake. Apple Chips. Endive with Pop. Goat Cheese and Honey Glazed Pecans. Oysters Bienville and Newburgers. Cheddar Biscuits. Braised Greens. Crawfish and Cream. Cream of Asparagus. Boursin Mashed Potatoes. Roasted Fingerling Potatoes. Spinach Medley. Medley of Roasted Vegetables. Apple Tag. Cheese Cake with Whipped Cream and Candy. Fruit Trifle. Sweet Potato Pie. Bread Pudding.

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## MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

### MUHAMMAD ALI'S GREATEST FIGHT (Stephen Frears, 2013), Reviewed by Carl Freedman (2013)

To describe MUHAMMAD ALI'S GREATEST FIGHT, Stephen Frears's new film about the Supreme Court decision that overturned Ali's conviction for resisting the draft, is to make it sound like a film that might have been made especially for me. Let me count the ways.

First, it is by Frears, and Frears is in my view one of the most accomplished and interesting British filmmakers of his generation. His breakthrough films MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE (1985) and SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID (1987) remain living masterpieces that combine humor and social realism in order to portray a multiracial Britain suffering yet persisting in the iron grip of Thatcherism. Frears went on to make fine films that tackled such remarkably diverse topics as decadent sexuality among the French aristocracy (DANGEROUS LIAISONS, 1988), weird interpersonal relations among American petty criminals (THE GRIFTERS, 1990), and the bond of friendship between two of the last cowboys in the American West (THE HILLO COUNTRY, 1998). He has demonstrated a particular facility in the making of biopics, focusing on such varied subjects as the doomed gay playwright Joe Orton (PRICK UP YOUR EARS, 1987), the scheming politicians Gordon Brown and Tony Blair (THE DEAL, 2003), and even Elizabeth Windsor herself (THE QUEEN, 2006).

Second, Frears's latest film is about Muhammad Ali, who was the ultimate sports celebrity of my youth and remains, for me, probably the greatest athlete of all time—a title I think he deserves not only because of his prowess in the ring (where he was arguably the most talented heavyweight who has ever lived, though some would rank him a bit below Joe Louis), but also because of his achievements as a great *performer* in ways that transcended boxing and sports altogether, and because of his real-life heroism: "No Viet Cong ever called me nigger," he famously said in defying, successfully though at great personal cost, the attempts of the US military to draft him for the Vietnam War. Third, even aside from Frears's use of splendid archival footage of Ali himself, there is first-rate acting in this film, specifically by Christopher Plummer as Justice John Marshall Harlan and Frank Langella as Chief Justice Warren Burger. (It may be recalled that Langella plays the second title character in Ron Howard's FROST/NIXON [2008], and so must be the only actor ever to play both a chief justice and the president who named him to America's highest bench.) Fourth, MUHAMMAD ALI'S GREATEST FIGHT is, generically, a talky courtroom drama, a form that I greatly enjoy. To offer just a few examples, 12 ANGRY MEN (Sidney Lumet, 1957), ANATOMY OF A MURDER (Otto Preminger, 1959), INHERIT THE WIND (Stanley Kramer, 1960), and TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (Robert Mulligan, 1962) are all among my favorite films—not to mention SEPARATE BUT EQUAL, George Stevens Jr.'s excellent 1991 TV miniseries about the Supreme Court's 1954 decision that outlawed racial segregation in America's public schools.

Given all this context, it would constitute an enormously deflationary aesthetic judgment if I had to report that I failed to enjoy MUHAMMAD ALI'S GREATEST FIGHT. Well, I did enjoy it, enough to sustain multiple viewings—and yet not as much as I expected to. I will presently describe what seem to me the film's main flaws; but first I will discuss the strong points that make it worth watching in the first place.

Plummer and Langella are two of the finest actors of their generation and, remarkably, both are continuing—Plummer is now 83, Langella 75—to do some of the best work of their careers. (As I write, Langella is appearing to huge acclaim at the storied Chichester Festival Theatre as the title character in KING LEAR, often considered the most complex and demanding of all dramatic roles.) In MUHAMMAD ALI'S GREATEST FIGHT, they turn their immense talents to representing the relationship between Harlan and Burger as the chief axis on the rightward side of the Supreme Court. Close personal friends, the two men have much in common. Both consider themselves to be judicial conservatives; both were named to the Court by Republican presidents (Harlan by Eisenhower, Burger by Nixon); and both are relieved that the era of the liberal Warren Court, on which Harlan served as a frequently dissenting voice, is now (in 1971) passing into history. Yet what the film gradually and powerfully dramatizes is Harlan's growing awareness of the fundamental differences between the two men—and in ways that seem to me faithful to the historical record.

Burger is shown to be essentially a politician. Despite his post at the very top of America's legal and judicial system, his knowledge of the law is limited and his concern for legal process more limited still. By contrast, Harlan—the grandson of a Supreme Court justice and the namesake of the most esteemed justice of all time—is pristinely devoted to the law. When, during a private chat, Burger mentions that he considers President Nixon "a good friend," with whom he talks frequently, Harlan is aghast: justices, he says, must remain completely aloof from politics, and he himself doesn't even vote in presidential elections. Burger simply wants Ali to be punished for his draft resistance. Harlan is personally sympathetic to Burger's view, and, at first, he also thinks it is what legality requires. But the more he examines the law and the facts of the case, the more his doubts grow. Partly guided by some research done by his most liberal clerk (for Harlan insists that he hires clerks purely for their intellectual qualifications, and cares nothing whatever about their political views), Harlan eventually concludes that Ali legally deserves the conscientious-objector status he has always claimed; and, at risk of shattering his friendship with Burger, he becomes the key figure in crafting a unanimous Court decision overturning the Ali conviction. At about the same time, he learns, poignantly enough, that this will be among his last cases; for he is diagnosed with incurable cancer, and given only months to live.

Interspersed with the dramatized deliberations at the Supreme Court is a good deal of file footage of Ali himself: a clever move on Frears's part in a couple of ways. Since Ali, like any other litigant, was not directly and personally involved in the appellate proceedings, the various archival clips nicely remind us of the man at the basis of the whole thing. Then too, Frears's decision to let Ali appear as himself is a fitting use and acknowledgement of the boxer's superlative performing skills. Though Will Smith, in Michael Mann's biopic *Ali* (2001), does as good a job, probably, as any actor could do, nobody could play Muhammad Ali as well as Ali played himself. In most of the clips, Ali appears with his trademark high spirits and deliberately comic arrogance. At the end, though, after the unanimous decision in his favor, he is unwontedly subdued, and declines to express resentment toward the governmental and boxing authorities who deprived him of what very likely would have been the three best years of his boxing life. Those men, says Ali, did what they believed to be the right thing, just as he did himself.

(Continued on Page 4)

### SICK LEAVE FLAP RANKLES DELGADO

An outcry from the ailing was heard on the Delgado campus as faculty governance officials probed a decision by the LCTCS (Louisiana Community and Technical College System) to suspend the accrual of sick leave to faculty teaching during the summer semester. Until May 2012, full-time faculty who taught during the feverish months earned the allocation of sick leave spelled out by the [relevant statutes](#). In the ill month of May 2012, the LCTCS moved to a centralized payroll system. That transition amalgamated Delgado into an ensemble of LCTCS campuses that had not been granting sick leave to those faculty who dedicated their summer hours to the education of Louisiana's youth. In a heads-up move, Delgado faculty governance officials conducted a survey of faculty leaders around the state, asking whether their campuses offered sick leave to summer employees. All of the answers received indicated that sick leave in the summer was a normal procedure. Efforts are now underway to address the summer sick leave. Good luck to Delgado faculty in recovering their inexplicably lost benefit.



Summer faculty at Delgado may need alternative podiums

### PARKING GARAGE SIGNS ON THE MOVE

More than a few colleagues have noticed that the new parking structure on the LSU A&M campus has been less than overpopulated. In addition to the necessity of estimating parking time and paying in advance, parkers looking at this cavernous edifice have been deterred by safety concerns. But the shortage of parkers may arise from one of the more entertaining gaffs in the history of public structures. It seems that installers have set directional signs too far for the road, with the result that, before finding the parking structure, drivers must first find the information signs. Zeal for the architectural integrity of the campus seems to have worsened the situation as visitors seeking the familiar bright blue "P" sign eventually encounter only dark brown, non-standard signage. There is, however, a happy if costly end to this story. In a move unprecedented since, in Shakespeare's Macbeth, the Birnam Forest walked over to Dunsinane, a new team of experts will relocate the signs to positions in view of the road.



Parkers sit still but parking signs move

MOVIE REVIEW (continued)

But MUHAMMAD ALI’S GREATEST FIGHT is not quite the film it might have been. For one thing, it is haunted by a considerable technical problem, namely that appellate law simply does not naturally offer the same kind of dramatic opportunities that the trial courtroom does. Stevens solves this problem in SEPARATE BUT EQUAL by capaciously showing the relations among most of the justices, as well as among the legal teams and their clients on both sides of the case. But Frears’s intent focus on the Harlan-Burger relationship, though it produces some scenes that are wonderful in themselves, tends to crowd out any wider perspective; and the difficulty of making Supreme Court deliberations interesting in either visual or narrative terms is thus exacerbated. Moreover, it does not help that, aside from Plummer and Langella (and Fritz Weaver, who gives a small but vivid performance as Justice Hugo Black), most of the acting is relatively undistinguished. Peter Gerety does a completely unconvincing turn as Justice William Brennan, the leader of the Court’s liberal wing, while the great Danny Glover is pretty much wasted in a perfunctory performance as Justice Thurgood Marshall—who, to make matters worse, is bizarrely portrayed as a buffoon who mixes up the names of his clerks and repeatedly comes late to Court conferences because he is engrossed in television soap operas (for a good corrective, see Sidney Poitier’s stunning portrayal of Marshall in SEPARATE BUT EQUAL). Stephen Frears has always been a prolific director, and sometimes, perhaps, too prolific for his own good. Though his best efforts are masterpieces, his lesser films often give the impression of having been thrown together too hastily. MUHAMMAD ALI’S GREATEST FIGHT is a pretty good film. But one can see how, given more time—both in the sense of more than the film’s 97 minutes of running time and in the sense of more time for the film’s preparation—it might have been an excellent one.

—Carl Freedman

LOMBARDI PENS BRIGHT RED UNIVERSITY BLUEPRINT

Back in the early days of printing, when Gutenberg presses cranked out hot titles that controverted political broils, a common genre was the “manual of statecraft,” in which a seasoned but dethroned (and, often enough, eventually executed) politician delivered experience-inspired maxims about the management of nations. Obama’s America may fall somewhat short of Elizabeth’s England, but the aforementioned genre has been revived in the latest effort by inexhaustible former LSU System President, John Lombardi. Since throwing off the shackles of the LSU System, Lombardi has been busy, condensing his exploits at multiple universities into a little red book, a book that, despite its color, might also be styled as *The Little Golden Book* of university governance: as a comprehensive but compact, pungent yet eminently usable, guide to the machinations in and of modern universities. With crystalline clarity and with a degree of precise distillation worthy of the finest whiskey makers of Soctland, Kentucky, or anywhere in-between, Lombardi delivers an array of observations that flow with laminar ease but that carry more info-bits than there are warts on a Heinz pickle. Tart and sassy yet erudite and urbane, the work bears comparison to Macchiavelli’s *The Prince*. The good-humored Lombardi peps up his production with dialogues revealing what life is like not only, as the song has it, “on Jupiter and Mars,” but also in Louisiana system offices. He shows us, for example, what it means, as Bobby jindal says, “to do more with less”: “The chair of the board of trustees calls the president. *What’s this I read in the paper about the university planning to close programs as state funding declines?* The president answers, *Well, you remember our discussion of budget at the last board meeting. We’ve lost 25 percent of state funding over the last three years, and we must now readjust the university’s budget to meet our income. Yes, says the chair, but the governor’s staff called and wants to make sure that we do nothing that can be blamed on the governor. Mr. Chairman, the president responds, we may not blame the governor, but the students and faculty whose programs must be reduced may have a different approach. Well, Lombardi releases little red book Mr. President, you need to manage the reduction so there is no public fallout. But Mr. Chairman, says the president, that will prevent us from making the changes that are essential for the effective operation of the university. Mr. President, says the chairman, you have your instructions.” Available at [Amazon.com](#) at a discounted price of \$23.45 and eligible for free shipping, the Lombardi masterpiece, in its Christmas-red jacket, is the ideal stocking-stuffer for your favorite Supervisor, Regent, or Chancellor.*

BOOKSTORE COMMITTEE SETS HIGH STANDARDS

Users of what once might have been called a campus bookstore but that is now prepositionally denominated “Barnes and Noble at LSU” enjoy a mockup of Mike the Tiger zooming above the display in a vintage fighter aircraft. Mike is not the only party soaring at the bookstore. In response to extensive faculty input (and a few outright complaints), LSU A&M Auxiliary Services has created a new “Bookstore Committee” comprised of four faculty representatives, student envoys, staff visitors, Barnes and Noble managers, and an assortment of stakeholders. Now meeting regularly in the upper conference room at the aforementioned facility, the committee has already succeeded in quieting the television monitors, in considering whether the bookstore provides the mandated “Parisian café” ambience, and in addressing shortfalls in textbook offerings. Progress is slow but steady; problems are complicated but have proved soluble. The committee discovered, for example, that Barnes and Noble had implemented a book order utility called “FacultyEnlight” that was more of a social media offering than a straightforward order input interface. “FacultyEnlight” allegedly allows faculty to chat up book selections with colleagues worldwide but apparently is spreading more darkness and confusion than luminescence. Faculty researchers also uncovered data from the American Bookstore Association demonstrating that independent bookstores that provide cultured environments and rich book selections are showing strong economic growth, even despite market dominance by online vendors such as Amazon and ABE. While setting a high standard for on-campus vendors, the Bookstore Committee is also creating models for dealing with the single-source contracts with which past administrators have straightjacketed campuses. Faculty members around the state might take note of this bold move to regain control of the campus environment. Ovations go to LSU Auxiliary Services Executive Director Margot Carroll, whose readiness to dialogue and whose skill as an event organizer has facilitated a long-overdue and now fruitful dialogue.

DIVERSITY DISCOVERS FACILITY SERVICES

More than a few whispers in the hallway have reported that many diversity departments or offices attend primarily to the prosperous or at least promising: to those members of minority groups who are ready to take a step up the socioeconomic ladder through higher education. A grimy secret that hides on many campuses is the lack of attention paid to those who work in those Facilities Services or similarly-denominated maintenance and mechanical departments that keep universities functioning. All but unseen, usually without union representation, and occasionally imported as outsourced rather than civil-service labor, those who work in buildings and grounds units seldom appear in opportunity-oriented university publications. Now LSU interim Diversity Director Kenneth Miles has taken a bold step toward the remedying of this neglect. Miles has begun an outreach to the most modestly remunerated members of the academic labor community. We are looking for Miles’s courageous effort to set off spinoff debates in our sometimes labor-averse state.

FACULTY SENATE NEWSLETTER GLOBAL SYNDICATE

The faculty senate newsletter phenomenon is going global. The fact that faculty governance newsletters of various scopes and qualities have been popping up all around America and all throughout the world has prompted Temple University newsletter editor Steve Newman to present his own online journal, *The Faculty Herald*, as the nexus for a network of faculty senate periodicals. Our own *Faculty Senate Monthly Newsletter* was quick to report its URL to Newman, who is developing a “links” page and system by way of creating a faculty newspaper syndicate. The current issue of Newman’s fine online newspaper features a long and articulate [interview](#) with the Temple University Provost, who, among many sagacious comments, affirms that online study will never replace classroom education.



Temple FS Newsletter Anchors Network

PENNINGTON PROVIDES MOOC PETRI

Despite its voluminous research output, the tangled architecture of the Pennington Center—built during the period of split-level houses, catwalks, and massive concrete-and-glass ambulatories—tends to convey a sense of vacancy. Speculative heads understandably buzzed when vast populations of top-level administrators swarmed into the cavernous Pennington auditorium on November 20th. Accompanied by their aides-de-camp and entourages, all the top brass from the Claiborne Building, that multi-system and Regent-inhabited castle of educational policy, turned out, as did a few captains of industry and under-employed philanthropists, to chat up the future of online education in Louisiana. The low-profile rank for high-ranking persons attracted little notice but may signal a rethinking of utopian expectations for the latest version of distance education.



CHRONICLE COMMENTARY TOUTS FACULTY LEADERSHIP

Those who routinely cruise the want ads—those who, as one well-placed search agent confided in a *Newsletter* staffer, “have their finger on the ‘send’ button ready to submit applications the days the ad comes out”—have noticed a reduction in the percentage of university employers who are relying on executive search services. More and more institutions are running their executive searches in-house. Could this signal the waning of the idiom of the administrative thoroughbred, of the not-so-dark horse recruited from distant pastures who would miraculously lead the professorial pack to some great goal at preternatural speed? In another evidence of the return to faith in faculty confidence (and to people who stay at an institution more than four years), *The Chronicle of Higher Education* released a commentary by educationalist Cathy N. Davidson that calls for the establishment of “institutional leadership” as an evaluation, promotion, and raise criterion and that also exhorts institutions to create leadership programs that will speed local colleagues into executive posts, thereby making the most of both their disciplinary competence, leadership talents, loyalty, and institutional memory. In her persuasive, eloquent essay, Davidson suggests that word such as “service” (per “teaching, research, and service” criteria in evaluation policies) “is fraught with contempt...[and] carries in its etymology a history of homage and servitude,” whereas “institutional leadership” carries the kind of ultra-bright-toothpaste-level “sex appeal” that a search firm such as LSU-contracted Bill Funk and can confer upon it. Davidson’s [column](#) is available for free online.

MCNEESE PARKING METER GOES “TILT”

Those who have lived long enough to remember mechanical pinball and similar game machine remember the “tilt” message that displayed were a player to lift the machine in an effort to prevent the ball from slipping down the chute and off the field of play. A parking garage may be a formidable burden to lift, but a similar “tilt event” has occurred at the beautiful new McNeese parking structure. Parking place counters confer an upscale structure on any traffic-oriented venue. They suggest the comings and goings at busy Heathrow Airport or perhaps a cinematic high-speed chase around curvy Aéroport Charles de Gaulle. Unfortunately, the kind of parking meter that withstands the comings and goings of the most glamorous bandits found its match among the McNeese parkers. After displaying “297” in the first-floor “spaces available” display for several weeks, the counters were recently shut down. An up-close look at the adjacent picture will reveal, in the blank display windows, the remnants of a red “FULL” message, as if the counter had overloaded and pooped out. On the other hand, no matter how disappointing these troubles with high-tech flow-maintenance equipment, the parking structure sends a clear message about the value of art. Whereas recent building projects at the big campuses (such as LSU A&M or ULL) have been devastatingly art-free, McNeese took advantage of the ready-molded construction technique to engross its luminescent logo in ageless granite aggregate. Applause to McNeese for remembering that art is at home even in a garage.



Above: McNeese traffic counter goes tilt  
Left: McNeese finds artistry even in parking

KING’S CONFAB COUNTERS USNWR

Media were justifiably agog at King Alexander’s opening gambit in the game of Louisiana higher education politics: the scheduling, with a mixture of stealth and panache, of an Obama-driven public testimony session smack-dab in the middle of a state so red that two of its universities abut a nominally ruddy river. Heeding advice from faculty governance officials that Louisiana universities needs more media-attracting events related to public policy, Alexander snatched a traveling company of educational policy wonks: federal policy experts who are sojourning around the nation, collecting public responses to policy initiatives as well as fronting for the Obama push for affordable higher education. Drawn together with the speed and cloaking required for an event less than congruent with Louisiana gubernatorial viewsw—an event that could well have attracted a veto from “the fourth floor”—the marathon confab lasted from 9:30 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening and attracted testimony from educators up and down Louisiana, whether from private Catholic colleges or from HBCUs or from assorted stakeholders and members of education-related constituencies.

An important subordinate theme of the event was the steady criticism of the pop-culture “rankings” such as those promulgated each year by *USNWR*. Lead guest Jamienne Studley, a Deputy Undersecretary at the Department of Education and former President of Skidmore College, joined with Alexander in suggesting that a “ratings” system might be better than raw “rankings.” Ratings could provide parents indications of the comparative efficiency of their investments in their children’s education. A “rating” system that was developed and administered by educated professionals could consider factors such as lifelong earning potential, quality of life, and professional accomplishment of graduates as well as the kind of raw prestige and institutional peer opinion measured by *USNWR*.

(Continued on Page 6)

NEA, NCHE RELEASE HIGHER-EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

The National Education Association, a leading union for both K–12 and university professionals, has served Louisiana higher education for several years, whether through assistance rendered to fledgling academic union LSUnited or through its many intellectual and social as well as culinary contributions to the “Alexandria Summit” meetings. In recent years, the state branch of the NEA, the Louisiana Association of Educators or “LAE,” has battled minimal funding and has come up against demands to share resources with other beleaguered states in which public employees have faced down hostile regimes. Now the NEA and LAE are resuming their quest to bring equity to the higher education industry. A national, NEA-affiliated organization, the National Council on Higher Education or “NCHE,” have released a newsletter reporting on recent accomplishments. Many of these deeds, including the organizing of a faculty in a labor-averse state, the sponsoring of independent research about the MOOCs, and the opening of debate about the use of adjunct and contingent labor, will interest those immured on Louisiana campuses. The [NCHE newsletter](#) may be viewed online.



NCHE newsletter recharges academico labor debate

PURCELL SETS HIGH STANDARD FOR OPEN SEARCHES

The eighteenth-century novelist Samuel Richardson subtitled his famous, proto-feminist novel, *Pamela*, with the wry phrase *Or Virtue Rewarded*, that “or” being pregnant with ambiguity. Although the *Newsletter* lacks the revenue stream to reward the Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education, it can certainly afford to bestow a well-earned compliment on him for allowing his name to be released during the recent competition for the position of Chancellor (system head) of the State University System of Florida. The competition was hardly fair, it being difficult to imagine that a system that had named an administration building after a candidate who had also made multi-million dollar contributions to university medical programs would opt for the most qualified rather than the most entrenched competitor. True, America lacks a mandatory retirement age, but it could well be asked whether it is in the best long-term interest of society to give an immensely wealthy mid-octogenarian pensioner the most lucrative retire-rehire deal in academic history (Criser having served as President in the 1980s) while talented persons in the prime of life are left waiting in the wings. There is often more dignity in honest defeat than in unctuous triumph; we offer up an ovation for Jim Purcell for his refusal to hide behind the curtains of a search firm—for his all-American, Thomas-Jefferson-style willingness to let the public to see all the candidates and all the options.



UF Criser Hall--more persuasive than any CV

## KING'S CONFAB (continued)

Studley's entourage drew some criticism for the inclusion in the proposed ratings system of measures such as lifelong earnings. Spokespersons for distinguished Catholic institutions complained that the high importance accorded to such a metric would discourage institutions from preparing students for social service or education careers. Also missing from the Studley-Alexander extravaganza was a clear commitment to the basic research and advanced study of the institutions. On the whole, however, Alexander showed a degree of sagesse and pluck in setting up a socially progressive education carousel that brought plenty of northeastern influence to a land where eastern, northern, and eastern connections usually hook up to the unemployment line.



Affordability confab convenes at Cook Center

## TIP OF THE MONTH: ROSITA'S OF SULPHUR

Mexican cuisine in Louisiana has followed a road bumpier than a microscopic view of the surface of a corn tortilla. Most Louisiana towns have hosted several inadequately managed franchise outlets for assorted national chains that offer generic Tex-Mex cuisine or, worse, that attempt to fuse mediocre Tex-Mex fare with Cajun flavor profiles. After hurricane Katrina, the Latino cookery situation briefly improved. Taquerias catering to the migratory construction worker population sprouted up hither and yon. Although these informal establishments offered flavorful and authentic *comida*, they failed to adapt to mainstream expectations vis-à-vis service and interior design. As a result, a durable clientele never materialized. Residents of and visitors to Southwest Louisiana—those affiliated with McNeese, Sowela, and institutions serving the Fort Polk region—may rejoice at the opening, along the dark conduit of Highway 190, of Rosarita's, a family-owned Mexican mini-bistro that offers a spectacular array of intensely flavorful dishes and that will appeal both to those in search of genuine Mexican specialties and to those looking for the familiar tacos, enchiladas, and chimichangas. A kind of oversized but still compact upgraded taqueria, Rosita's specializes in parrilladas, an upgraded and seasoning-spiked enhancement of fajitas. The sociable proprietor has even hit on the idea of parrilladas for two, a double portion of mixed beef and chicken strips with the usual piquant vegetables that diners may share. True to its taqueria tradition, Rosita's maintains a substantial slate of small plates, whether individual tacos or small burritos, but it also provides the more demanding diner with the "plates" and "dinners" that have always made the American version of Mexican cuisine so colorful. Out on the north side of Sulphur, Rosita's is not exactly "freeway convenient," but it is well worth the drive, especially considering that one may also cross the street and take home some of the legendary boudin from the Sausage Link, a top-rated Cajun charcuterie. Be sure to chat with the friendly young manager of Rosita's, who shows that "the next generation" has not given up on local color! Rosita's lacks a web site but it may be found in the real world at 2401 Napoleon Street in Sulphur.



## SEISMIC CATERPILLAR KO-S KAUFFMAN

For better or worse, Louisiana abounds in superb examples of the low-budget futurist style practiced by the Works Progress Administration. Although the Newsletter laments the reluctance of state design officials to experiment with new architectural idioms, it is also applauds the respect shown for those building that, despite their lack of modern efficiency, continue to ornament our campuses as they transition into the "historic" category, in some cases even making it onto the National Historic Register. For the last several months, McNeese State University has sedulously renovated its behemoth, WPA-developed **Kaufman Hall**, the original, core edifice around which the McNeese campus gradually emerged. Then, just as faculty were returning to this heavyweight and increasingly historic pile, a heavy construction vehicle rumbled over and cracked a pipe buried to close to the surface, with the result that the Kaufman basement flooded, doing the predictable damage to electrical and other accoutrements. This artificially induced, quasi-seismic catastrophe has shuttered Kaufman Hall at least until the upcoming semester. Good luck to the "Cowboys" in the restoration of this bulky architectural gem.



Kaufman Hall, McNeese State

## LSU HRM: MAGNANIMOUS MARAUDERS!

Huge developments have been under quietly modest way over at LSU A&M Human Resources Management. Following up on the installation of its new, improved, and attractive web site, LSU A&M HRM has added a bevy of new utilities that promote ease of operation and make life easy for university employees. Especially laudable is the new employment **verification utility**, which allows employees to provide verification of employment to banks, lenders, landlords, and, indeed, any other concerned party. With advances like this one, it is no wonder that, according to that infallible source, *the grapevine*, LSU HRM was informed sub-rosa that it would be taking over the LSU System-wide benefits program. Energy is high in HRM as the prospect of offerings such as a Roth IRA and improved dental and vision insurance programs crepusculate into view.

## ALEXANDER PROMOS ACADEMIC FREEDOM

At a recent Press Club of Baton Rouge meeting, an ideologically unrestrained reporter asked LSU System President King Alexander whether he thought it might be time to replace "anachronistic" institutions "such as tenure" with something more market-relevant. To his credit, Alexander delivered a definitive if occasionally understated response. On the "plus" side, Alexander left no doubt that academic tenure was necessary to ensure that faculty could carry out their tasks without sanctions; on the "minus" side, Alexander hedged into a utility-based argument, suggesting that tenure allows for the functioning of those who would better society, but standing back from a more spirited defense of curiosity and wide-ranging, limit-challenging research. Alexander's laudable first attempt—which, the Newsletter hopes, will eventually be followed by philosophical as well as pragmatic arguments—was carried on [YouTube](#) (the segment on academic freedom begins at approximately the 32:30 minute mark).

### University College Seeks Nominations for Teaching Awards and Advisor of the Year

LSU University College is honored to accept nominations for the following notable awards.

Complete nomination packets can be found [HERE](#).

Nominations for all awards should be submitted electronically no later Friday, January 3, 2014 to: Debra Blacher at [dblache@lsu.edu](mailto:dblache@lsu.edu).

### GEORGE H. DEER DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

Open to any LSU faculty member who teaches courses for which University College students are enrolled.

Nominations should be restricted to persons having taught University College students in three of the past four regular semesters including the semester in which the award is made.

### ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TEACHING ASSISTANT AWARD

Given in recognition of outstanding teaching ability and service to students.

Nominations are limited to graduate teaching assistants who have an academic or fiscal year appointment.

### ADVISOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Based on the national criteria of the National Academic Advising Association.

Only one nominee will be selected.

Any individual serving as an academic advisor and employed by LSU may be nominated. The nominee need not be a NACADA member.

Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock  
225-578-6822  
[jcraddock@lsu.edu](mailto:jcraddock@lsu.edu)



## Lifestyle Feature

### LIFESTYLE FEATURE: INDIA ABOVE NEW ORLEANS

Ours is an age obsessed with diversity. Seldom do we adequately appreciate those occasional instances of homogeneity that provide the pieces within the diversity puzzle. After all, there must be some people who are something (and not diversely something else) in order to create the contrast that makes blending possible. Concentrations of ethnic groups often move incrementally into an area until, one day, a city planner suddenly realizes that a China town or a Jewish enclave or a barrio has arisen. Such a process is now underway in Baton Rouge, which suddenly boasts a full five Indian restaurants, four of them within a mile or two of one another in what might be styled the “Newest Delhi” of east Baton Rouge. More amazing still, this new Indian wave has surged into Shreveport, with a sixth north-of-New-Orleans Indian entry garnering favorable reviews. The energy animating this Indian ingress seems to be flowing away from the aforementioned Crescent City, which offers only three Indian bistros, and toward the medium-sized cities, where vacated restaurant facilities are plentiful, where rent is cheap, and where both immigration and sophistication seem to be on the rise.

Here, then, is a rank-order review of the Indian food available in Baton Rouge, with a postscript on the mini-Indian-upsurge in the upper-right Louisiana corner of Shreveport.

Not terrible, indeed very good but nevertheless caught at the bottom of the rankings, is one-year-old Curry N Kebab, located not too far from the intersection of Coursey and Sherwood Forest, at the heart of the new Indian district of Baton Rouge. Like the now-fizzled Comet ISON, Curry N Kebab started out with great and brilliant promise but has since suffered from a combination of service faults and managerial confusion. There is no missing the fact that at least the original menu at Curry N Kebab offered a level of diversity in south Asian cuisine that Baton Rouge restaurants had never attained. Regional specialties as well as a plethora of vegetarian dishes opened the promise of an inventive restaurant comparable to those that dot the British landscape. Unfortunately, the management has decided to downscale the menu to the top-selling items and to emphasize the buffet rather than the à la carte selections. Indeed, the buffet seems to have become an obsession. As soon as one enters the cramped entryway, one is immediately asked “what kind of na’an bread do you want,” a buffet order (which comes with a free na’an) being presumed. The manager delays all à la carte orders while restocking the buffet, with the result that wait times can range up to an hour. Staff motion is irregular and often frenetic with occasional quarrels breaking out and even with customers being recruited into in-house conversations, with the result that the experience resembles an inter-ethnic BBC comedy rather than a calm dining evening. Nevertheless, there is no doubting that Curry N Kebab can offer some fine and divers dishes (when they arrive, which is about the time that Quasimodo begins ascending the spires of Notre Dame).



Appropriately positioned a little higher up the ladder of Indian restaurants is The Himalayas, tucked away in a strip mall on Sherwood Forest just north of Coursey Boulevard. Festive in appearance despite its somewhat harsh location owing to its cheerful prayer flag decking, Himalayas specializes in north Indian and even Tibetan cuisine but also features most of the classic American-British-Indian favorites, whether chicken tikka masala or papadams. Himalayas seems to thrive on the lunch trade, with the result that it, too, pushes a buffet, although the pro-buffet campaign pales in comparison to the mania at Curry N Kebab. Himalayas also explores uncommon main courses, including the numerous renditions of goat that spangle the Indian subcontinent. The drawback at the quaint Himalayas is the misunderstanding of modern service standards. The proprietor's children play (and sometimes scream and cry) in the dining room, even riding their toy vehicles through it, an act that, if initially cute, quickly grows tiresome. Dishes are not warmed, with the result that the otherwise delicious Indian sauces, which are at their best when hot off the stove, lose much of their punch and appeal. Himalayas, as the name implies, is an up-and-down proposition; the *Newsletter* is hopeful that eventually the ups will prove more numerous than the dips.



Occupying the middle of the list of a robust transplant from New Orleans, The Bay Leaf, which is also located near the Sherwood-Coursey intersection. Since its opening a few years ago, The Bay Leaf has been something of a conundrum. It, too, occupies a small strip mall, yet it aspires to a fine-dining look. Its identity is thus difficult to ascertain, especially considering that, of necessity, the large wait-staff is comprised mostly of local people who, however well-meaning, seem to have no experience of India and only minimal understanding of Indian food. The naivete of the wait staff contrasts awkwardly with the upscale ambitions of the restaurant, resulting in surprisingly clumsy service. Although diverse and inviting, the menu is also inadequately explained, with the result that one never knows for sure what one is ordering. Portion control is curious at best. Some appetizers dwarf main courses and challenge even robust appetites; some main courses look more like side dishes; some bread accompaniments could hold, within their folds, an entire meal. Overall, the food, whatever its pretensions, is good, tasty, and occasionally authentic, although some efforts at fusion cuisine disappoint. One generally leave the Bay Leaf uncertain of what has happened and not convinced that one has enjoyed a composed meal. But, then, a composed meal is a western idea; perhaps the miscellaneousness of this venue provides a degree of authenticity.

(Continued on Page 9)



### HOT JOB MARKET IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS

Long-termers will remember both “the foreign language fourteen,” the fourteen foreign-language instructors who lost their posts amid a budget-induced retrenchment, and will also recall the flap that accompanied the elimination of French programs at venues such as Southeastern Louisiana University. Those keen on “workforce development” declared that foreign language training had become irrelevant to industrial needs in Louisiana and that students could earn a better living by readying themselves for, say, the chicken processing plant that Louisiana economic development officials had stationed in the northern quarter of our state (or, perhaps, for the “V-Car” plant that Jindal officials considered an economic trendsetter). Now, only three years later, the hottest job market turns out to be that appertaining to foreign language skills. According to CNN, demand is high and wages are substantial for persons either directly concerned with foreign languages (translators, interpreters, guides) or for persons who can supplement other skills with foreign language competence. Both government and private employers, CNN reports, cannot find enough fluent personnel to meet the translation need.

### SHORTS TRAVEL SERVICE FOLDS BOOKIT INTO FINDIT

Past issues of the Newsletter have chronicled the foibles of state travel agent Short's Travel, most recently noting the rise and eventual breakdown of BookIt, a utility that allowed for the transfer of itineraries discovered on the open market into the state-approved Short's environment. Short's seems to have heard the clamor about the weaknesses of BookIt. A few weeks ago, it took down instructional materials from YouTube and, better, created a new “app” that upgraded BookIt. The efficacy of this new invention, FindIt, remains to be tested, but users are cautiously optimistic. FindIt, which resides in browsers and which activates when itineraries are shared, continues the “look” and functionality of BookIt. Users who experienced success with BookIt will scarcely notice the difference (other than the fact that FindIt seems to work). Also emerging from Short's is a new and improved layout and dialogue box array that seems to allow for more precise targeting of arrival and departure times or, alternately, for broader ranges in fare searches. For example, users may now select spans of time such as “afternoon” or “evening” rather than specific hours in the hope of better fares. Alas, the easygoing “any time” option that appears on every other major travel site remains absent. In the hotel reservation area, new windows seem to allow for more precise targeting of addresses so as to find hotels near non-airport destinations. The “Short's Problem” is a long way from solved, but slow progress is surely better than no progress.



FindIt App





"A G Answers" is your premier 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).

*Percival, a colleague in Plaquemine, writes:*  
Dear A G,

*I live on the other side of the river from the Old War Skule but I'm a member of the University community and so would like to pose a question. Being a careful reader of my retirement account statements, I've noticed that, although I'm paid every month on the 21st, my retirement account is never credited before the 25th and sometimes shows new contributions as late as the 30th. I have a friend who works in another university system who tells me that contributions sometimes show up fifteen days after the pay date. Through electronic deposits, my pay reaches me on the same day that it is due, but my retirement money lingers in some unknown zone for a week or more, earning neither dividends nor interest. A G, could you explain why it takes so long to do an electronic transaction that should require only a nanosecond? Where is the money during those "missing days"? Is there anything that the average wage-earner can do to speed up the process? Your reader, Percival.*

It is rather hard for me to answer this question precisely in regard to ORP contributions because the folks at TRSL have never been very forthcoming in exactly what LSU employees receive in return for the administrative fee that is deducted from their pension contributions. I suspect that the pension simply does not place a priority on moving funds quickly to the optional retirement plans. Of course the fact that a fee to administer the accounts is deducted from each ORP members contributions should place some burden on the system to move quicker. That said TRSL has never hidden their opposition to the Optional Retirement Plan and in my opinion does not make servicing that plan a priority.

I take no pleasure in the fact that other university systems in the state take even longer to post the contributions of their employees, but at least I am comforted knowing that the hardworking and talented people in LSU's payroll office are moving our money as quickly as possible.

The problem is not just with the ORP contributions since we face similar delays with 403b contributions. In the case of the 403b contributions we have no one to blame but ourselves. The technology being used to process payroll on campus is a legacy system that is old and mainframe based. The ability of the folks in payroll to move money directly from your payroll account to the vendors is severely limited due to the age of the technology and so as a result the process is done manually. I have been told that LSU is the largest employee that TIAA-Cref presently services that still submits contributions via a paper check. The fact that virtually no errors have been noted in my three years on campus is a testimony to the quality of service we all receive from the payroll process. Still, we all can agree that it is time for an improvement in our technology.

A group of individuals from across campus have been hard at work reviewing the most current products available to higher education and it is hopeful that the selection of a new ERP to replace the mainframe based system will take place during the next calendar year. While not solving the issue of TRSL's tardy distributions to the ORP vendors, the new technology will assist LSU to get money to the pension people quite a bit faster. I believe it will also allow for an extremely rapid distribution of your 403b contributions directly to the appropriate vendor.

Another aspect we are looking at is whether LSU should consider a "single remitter" for our 403b plans. This was considered some years ago but not implemented due to a variety of reasons. If we can find the right firm and create an arrangement that meets state statutes we could use a third party to process 403b contributions much faster than we could do so on our own. I have recently asked several groups on campus to help me in reviewing the services available to see if such a move is possible.

Since we are discussing retirement savings I would like to tell you that as a result of inquiries and requests from faculty on campus I have begun an investigation into the possibility of adding Roth IRA's as an option to our Supplemental Retirement Savings Plans (403b). I will be discussing with the folks in legal the feasibility of altering our 403b plan document to include Roth IRAs in the near future and I have already asked some of the 403b vendors to start to put together proposals for adding Roth IRAs to their offerings.

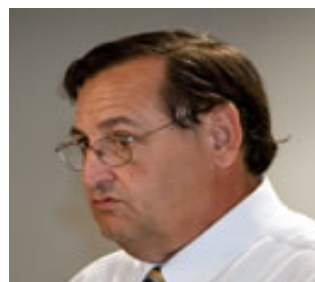
## TRSL PROXY SPURNS FACULTY PROBE

The November 2013 issue of the *Newsletter* revealed that state actuaries had proposed slashing the "normal cost" for higher education retirement plans by a whopping 1½%, nearly a 30% reduction in the already substandard sums that faculty have been receiving in recent years. The "normal cost" is that portion of the employer contribution that reaches employee accounts. Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana ("TRSL"), which has long taken the position that the protection of its operations comes before advocacy for the economic benefit of faculty members, has unleashed a proxy counter-attack on faculty investigators.

The adverse effect on faculty of the retirement fund crisis is so severe that the six "facts" promulgated in *Campus Connection*, a personal newsletter promulgated by the TRSL Board Chair, requires at least abbreviated rebuttal. Faculty members should be assured that faculty governance officers throughout the state are working together to reform retirement plans that are among the worst in the nation.

Here is the truth about the six "facts" in *Campus Connection*.

One: The logo is misleading; the "words" are not from "your TRSL Board of Trustees representative." "Your" is misused because TRSL does not allow Optional Retirement Plan participants to vote in Board elections. Nor does it distribute notices of election to campus TRSL customers. Two: The claim that employer contributions have never been cut to pay the unfunded accrued liability ("UAL") is misleading. Indeed, employer contributions have been increased, but ever-larger portions of those contributions go not to faculty in the Optional Retirement Plan ("ORP"), but rather into the subsidy of pension payouts to non-higher-education plan participants and into the UAL. Three: The fact that the actuary who calculates the normal cost is licensed does not solve the fundamental problem of a distorted, unfair retirement plan. (Continued on Page 9)



A G Monaco

## UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM CONSIDERS CONSENT AGENDA OPTION

At its December 6th meeting, the Board of Supervisors of the University of Louisiana System considered a proposal to promote "the more efficient management of Board meetings" by congregating "non-controversial items" into a single consent agenda. The proposal begins on a good footing by proposing guidelines as to what qualifies as "non-controversial." On the other hand, just as one man's meat is another man's poison, so one colleague's notion of the non-controversial might well vary from another's. Certainly other Louisiana systems have tried to use the consent agenda to squelch debate on major topics, including system-wide reorganization. Let us hope that the new procedures proposed for the University of Louisiana System will lead to efficiency rather than concealment. With the transparency-loving Sandra Woodley holding the gavel, the prospects seem good.

## LSUS BAGS NOEL SCHOLARSHIP BONANZA

We hear a great deal about the economic value of the STEM disciplines and about their centrality not only to universities but to the aspiration of students. But, in the front lines of undergraduate education, is it always the STEM fields that deliver the dollars? The experience of LSU in Shreveport tells another tale. In a surprise pre-Thanksgiving announcement, Shreveport's Noel Foundation, which supports an array of community arts efforts as well as [The Noel Collection](#), a prominent rare book library on the LSUS campus, declared its intention to fund as many as thirty-five \$4K scholarships by way of supporting worthy students from the Shreveport-Bossier metroplex. Humanists will take heart that Noel Foundation scion [James Smith Noel](#) dedicated his entire legacy to and continuously affirmed the relevance of the humanities and the arts.

## SAFETY MANIA YIELDS COMMITMENT TO URINALYSIS

Past issues of the *Newsletter* have revealed the ease with which the normal irregularities of human experience metamorphose, under the influence of not-so-big-data initiatives, into menacing foreshadowing of dangerous futures. Recently, for example, improvement in the data reporting for campus police gave the impression that a crime wave had erupted. Faculty Senate officials on the LSU A&M campus have already organized a campus-wide committee to deal with the premature release of a "key issuance" policy that triggered concern about access to laboratories by industrious students. That committee continues to do marquee-quality work. Over Thanksgiving break, faculty members on the aforementioned campus received another document in the history of American safety mania: an implementation mandate for a policy expanding drug testing to a veritable panorama of persons allegedly involved in security-sensitive work. The policy would require not only random drug testing of multitudinous persons but would extend to graduate assistants, who would be required to sign "affirmation" documents indicating their readiness for urinalysis. One faculty member has already refused to impose these "affirmation" documents on advanced students; fortunately, no sanctions for this abstention have yet been proposed. The LSU Faculty Senate is considering a [resolution](#) that would constrain these intrusions into researchers' restrooms.

### LIFESTYLE FEATURE (Continued)

Coming in at the number two position is Baton Rouge's old standby, India's, now an outlier over on Essen Lane. The greatest attribute of India's is its dependability. It has fronted the same menu since its founding in the early 1990s, although recently it has added a somewhat clumsy insert featuring south Asian options as well as Indian fast food such as various renderings of the dosa. Over the years, India's has featured many chefs, each of whom has put his or her spin on the standard English-Indian specialties. Some chefs have been better than others, but, year in and year out, India's has turned out appealing plates. Occasionally, ordinary rice is substituted for Basmati; occasionally, the quality of the chutneys wavers; but, overall, India's performs with admirable regularity. India's has managed to keep its buffet in the background and to respect connoisseurs who order from the menu. It has, however, fallen behind the times by leaving its beverage service and dish collection station out in the open, in the dining area, to sometimes unappealing effect. The management at India's is strangely moody. Diners are recognized and greeted, but they often detect a slightly unsociable atmosphere—although, who knows, that reserve may be polite deference as viewed by the somewhat grim manager. Special hint: Although chicken tikka masala is an India's classic, the butter chicken, a related dish, is well worth a try.



Winning the contest among the rich selection of Indian eateries is the brand-new Al Noor, positioned near the intersection of Coursey and Stumberg in the vast parking lot of a deteriorating grocery-anchored shopping center. Al Noor is a Louisiana startup with an inter-ethnic flair. A genuine husband-and-wife (i.e., mom-and-pop) operation, Al Noor features the chef who ignited Curry N Kebab but who subsequently defected owing to the frantic eccentricities of the Curry N Kebab proprietor. What is most striking about Al Noor is its quaint design coup. Of all things, it has succeeded in converting an aborted Pizza Hut building into a cozy, well-lit, nicely decorated Indian bistro. Although it offers a buffet, it limits its smorgasbord to lunch on specified days and distracts attention from the buffet apparatus with peripheral lighting at night. The Al Noor Chef-Patron has taken all the dishes that he brought to the original Curry N Kebab and has amplified them with an assortment of specialties that span the wide range of the world's most culinarily diverse continent. God as well as the devil being in the details, Al Noor deserves compliments for the quality of its na'an bread as well as for the magnificence of its saffron and its cumin rice. Plating merits high marks, with apparatus such as ornamented kettles from assorted Indian regions giving the presentation a genuinely indigenous "feel" that is lacking in all other restaurants. Plan to visit Al Noor at your next opportunity; it's the hottest as well as most flavorful option in town!



And, speaking of towns, let us not forget that Shreveport, way up in the northwest quarter of our state, on the other side of the "Tandoori Desert" (the Indian-food-free zone between Krotz Springs and Mansfield), offers a smash-hit of an Indian dining venue. That Asian opportunity is no less than the Indigo Indian Bistro, which abuts the Bert Kouns Highway that leads toward LSUS. Indigo offers what The Bay Leaf is still struggling to attain: subtle classiness and upscale but hearty and regional food. Although a little stark in its black-and-white livery, Indigo entices the diner with subtle reconfigurings of standard Indian meals as well as experimental specials. Indigo offers some of the most vertical as well as complex flavor profiles in the Caddo Parish area. When rolling northward, don't miss it (indeed, you can't miss it, for its energetic flavors have a way of pleasantly smacking one in the old face!).

### TRSL PROXY (Continued)

This information is misleading because it conceals the lack of accountability on the part of the actuaries, who are employed not by plan participants, but by a state agency. Four: While it is true that UAL debt has existed since 1936, this fact does not undo the inadequacy and dishonesty of the retirement plan, nor does it justify what faculty governance officers regard as an illegal entailing of a public debt on a privatized retirement fund. Five: The identity between ORP and defined benefit plan normal costs does not show equity, but rather demonstrates that monies earmarked for private retirement accounts are flowing, illegally, into public debt. Six: The posting of a report on an obscure corner of a poorly designed web site is not adequate notice by contemporary standards. TRSL makes no effort to communicate with its members through email or any other usual and customary means. It uses the phrase "active members" to hide its refusal to grant voting rights to ORP participants, whom it does not regard as members but from whom it extracts a management fee for unknown purposes.

It is surely to be hoped that the time and energy devoted by TRSL proxies to justifying unfair and inadequate retirement plans should be redirected to advocacy for faculty welfare. It is certainly time for open, statewide elections for TRSL Board membership—elections that are announced through modern means and that are open to ORP participants, who have no voice in TRSL affairs and who are barred from the benefits of market competition among retirement plan vendors.



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