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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, October 2014

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

A prominent leader on a rather large Louisiana university recently opened his monthly letter to the campus community with an announcement, in bold-face type, that all may rejoice in the discovery that incoming students had averaged 25.82 on the ACT entrance examination. That, with two-digit decimal accuracy, while the retirement system sweeps away two-digit full-integer percentages of faculty retirement money and while more than two layers of paint peel away in almost every decaying academic building. Setting aside the obvious problems with the physical and economic conditions under which academic professionals toil, one can only wonder what this outburst of administrative enthusiasm over so excruciatingly refined a statistic might signify. What mentality manifests itself in elation over not only an ACT average score, but in devilish details that resolve far beyond plausible margins of error?

The most generous explanation for this granulated elation is the desperate hope of finding some—any—news that is not only good, but bullet-proof. Louisiana higher education executives are clever enough to recognize that faculty discontent is so severe that even small emotional cough drops can sweeten the day and soothe the soul. Campus leaders also know that a solid number (or, as they prefer, “metric”) with digits reaching into the decimal places is hard to dislodge from memory and harder still for amateurs such as rank-and-file professors to refute. Yet, in the end, and even giving credit for good intentions, intelligent readers are left wondering whether an incremental ACT statistic is the best that the ever-diffuse “they” can do and whether this information and \$3.95 would cover the cost of a cappuccino.

What we see in this anesthetic opener is the tragedy of contemporary higher education administration: the diversion of the remarkable talents of persons who not only excel in academic disciplines but who also have, at some time or other, demonstrated leadership skills and management capacities. A combination of political pressures, inadequate backing from management boards, and alienation in the mass clientele of public higher education has re—trained the highly educable persons who comprise the administrative upper echelon in the art of triviality: in the grasping after and obsessing over that which is least offensive, least dangerous, and, sadly, least inventive. And misleading: The smart money would gladly wager that a person with an ACT score of 25.81 might well make some contribution to reaching Mars, curing diseases, or improving the performance of Rachmaninoff.

Higher education has always been a matter of added, not subtracted value. Higher education takes a person who presumably could forage his or her way through life and adds to that basic human skill set and basic human value a combination of aspirations and the means to fulfil them. What we are seeing in politically cramped higher education administrations is the reverse of this process as top-level administrators carefully pare away from their presentations anything with even the slight potential to elicit controversy. In the long term, the cost of caution is extremely high. Students who seek decimal resolution rather than abundant added value will eventually regard not only the epiphenomenal arts—disciplines such as philosophy or music history that add to the quality of life but have minimal commercial value—but the university itself as too big, grand, an expensive project. What university leaders often forget is that the raw competence required for workforce development and the profit arising from industry are themselves valuable owing to larger drives and imperatives such as curiosity, cultural curatorship, and the art of good citizenry. Few would be interested in the great big beautiful tomorrow of Disney legend or even in the latest tweet on the smart phone were it not for the residue of at least semi-great expectations—of goals greater than moving the needle on an entrance test that, after all, is itself only a vendor’s product that has been highly enhanced by the imagined value of a college education.



Kevin Cope

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President’s Welcome.....	1
Higher Education Headliner; Tip of the Month.....	2
Monthly Movie Review.....	3
Advisor Agreement Startles A & M Student Supporters; Howard Homer’s Enrollment Series, Invokes Infield Proposition Rule; New Commish Enwraps Opportunity in Mystery; Slam-Dunker Salvatore Takes Down the Net.....	4
2014 Fall Tech. Share.....	5
Cazes Pioneers Co-worker Pride; This Time I Don’t Need a Drink: The Sad Case of Kaufman Hall; LSU to Revamp PS-36; Systems Sides with Dragon Against St. George; McNeese Branding Bonanza.....	6
Alexandria Summit Draws Gubernatorial Candidate; Wide-open Security: The Open and the Shut in the Commissioner’s Search.....	7
US Chamber of Commerce Issues Report Card on Higher Education; Recruiting Billboard Battle Blazes; Status of Faculty Benefits Ad Sponsored by LSUnited.....	8
Lifestyle Feature.....	9
Lifestyle Feature con’t; Qualtrics Ad.....	10
Personnel Actions Philanthropy Driving Inequality; LSU Flips Master Switch, Ignites Planning Process.....	11
Recognition Replaces Consent in Drug Policy Publicity; Oddity of the Month; LSUnited Ad.....	12
Bountiful Buzz Animates HRM; Southern Senate Demands Compensation Policy; LSU ORED Embraces Louisiana Cultural Identity; Calcutta in Caddo.....	13
Lawsuit Targets Retirement Plans; International Recruiting Firms Dazzle University Officialdom.....	14
Veterinary School and Hospital Ad.....	15
A.G.’s Corner.....	16
AG’s Corner Continued; Roth-IRA talk Ad.....	17
United Way Ad.....	18

# Higher Education Headliner



Mary Stebbing

Poised, prepared, and thoughtful, Mary Stebbing considers her words carefully and delivers them with an economy and precision that is not surprising, considering that she is an efficiency expert and currently a manager of Finances and Administrative Services. A CPA and certified auditor, Stebbing knows how to crunch numbers, but she is, also, interested in the human element. This can be a difficult balancing act. When looking at the graphic services printing operation, Stebbing concluded that using outside vendors rather than in-house personnel would be more efficient, as outside vendors were able to accommodate innovations of the market place. Of the forty people laid off, thirty four were re-assigned within the university, but six were not. Such tough decisions do not always make everyone happy, but they are part of Stebbing's job. She does, though, emphasize the need for good relations and customer service.

Customer service is very important in the private sector, so it is no surprise that Stebbing brought the same concept of service with her to LSU. Stebbing left a successful career in accounting where she had worked for Fortune 500 companies like ExxonMobil and Avery Dennison in the fast-paced corporate cities of Texas. Stebbing, though, wanted to come home to her alma mater, LSU, where she had previously earned a bachelor's degree. She did return in 2003 and began doing here what she had done successfully in corporate America before – internal audits. She describes internal audits as “finding issues, but not being able to actually fix anything.” That feeling of being “hands off” with regard to problem solving was a source of frustration, so in her current role she enjoys being part of the solution, working with multiple people in departments that span the campus. She very much enjoys being able to give back to her alma mater by working with members of the student body, another aspect of life on a college campus she was not able to enjoy in the glass citadels of commerce. Stebbing helps departments fix what she calls their “pain points,” otherwise known as inefficiencies. These “pain points” could be something as small as getting lab keys to graduate students, but as large as replacing the thirty year-old cobalt mainframe. That mainframe, far past its prime, is literally integral to every facet of LSU from accounting and payroll to student registration and graduation. The mainframe update is actually in process, and Stebbing believes that this may be complete as early as

July 2016. The (much needed) update may be exciting for some, but terrifying for others, as new technologies always come with challenges, quirks, and necessary trainings.

Stebbing is incredibly loyal to LSU and committed to the One LSU movement, hoping to create “cross pollination” between the various campuses of the LSU system. She also hopes to increase the online program offerings, expanding LSU's student body, or, as she might say, its clientele, far beyond its physical campuses. She sees these pieces as being an integral part of the system's success. As evinced by leaving the private sector for LSU, Stebbing feels great loyalty to LSU and to her home state of Louisiana.

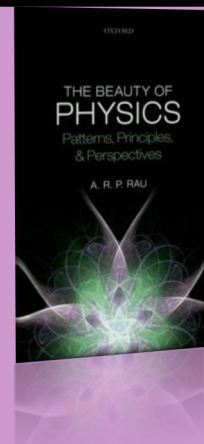
When asked three words to describe herself, they were “mom,” “team player,” and “Cajun.” Stebbing was born and raised in New Roads, an historic town in Pointe Coupee Parish known for trail rides, Mardi Gras, and zydeco. Being close to her home town, its historic traditions, and family are very important to her. As a mother of two, as well as a career woman, she understands very well how to maintain balance and efficiency. But that second word she chooses, “team-player,” is the most important word for what she means to LSU.

Stebbing's desire to help foster interdepartmental cooperation and communication at LSU is crucial to her mission to create a better functioning whole. Not easily rattled, Stebbing maintains her professionalism, while still taking individual concerns into consideration. She can look at the whole picture or the individual brush strokes, which is what makes her so good at her job. Although she is a realist, Stebbing admits that she often wants to implement changes and have results more quickly than it is possible to expect. This, though, is part of being in the public sphere, rather than the private sector, and LSU personnel are accustomed to a slower pace. Working within the system, though, is integral and an important part of Stebbing's position.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman

## TIP OF THE MONTH

Academic people are seemingly resistant to the best efforts of Santa Claus. Finding that special gift for the man or woman who not only has everything but also has direct access to the riches of the mind poses a challenge. Now, one of Louisiana's leading faculty activists has shown his intellectual plumage, as well as his care for the public, by penning a magnificent new book in the field of high-quality popular science. In *The Beauty of Physics*, well-known higher-education commentator A. R. P. “Ravi” Rau leads fascinated readers into a world of unifying patterns: of recurring themes and reiterating principles of organization that unite physics with art and science with beauty. Committed not only to the law but to the splendor of nature, Rau continues the post-Enlightenment drive to discover the symmetry not only of particles or of architectural compositions, but of nature and all its representation. This ideal Christmas or Hanukkah gift will emerge in November but may be pre-ordered from the prestigious [Oxford University Press](#).





# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

## Godzilla (Gareth Edwards, 2014),

Reviewed by Carl Freedman (2014)

"The visual," writes the cultural critic Fredric Jameson in the first sentence of his first book on cinema, "is *essentially* pornographic." The category of pornography is here being used in a sense wider than its more common meaning of representations designed to stimulate sexual desire—though the prominent display of beautiful male and female bodies in the history of sculpture, painting, and, more recently, film is by no means irrelevant to Jameson's point. His argument is that visual art finds its proper end or telos in the enthralled contemplation of the visible rather than—or at least far more than—in the cognitive conceptualization of the aesthetic object. I would add, however, that film is a mixed art, much less purely visual than sculpture or painting; cinema, after all, cannot be reduced to cinematography. However we may weigh the various components of film—a matter of considerable debate in film theory—it is evident that the visual dimension co-exists with important narrative, dramatic, verbal, cognitive, histrionic, sonic, and other dimensions. It follows, then, that different kinds of film will be more or less "pornographic" in Jameson's extended sense (and I hope it is unnecessary to add that the adjective is used in a purely descriptive and generic way, without any connotations of moralistic disapproval).

The sex film—pornography in the more narrow sense—is, of course, a privileged, or at least a prominent, instance of the pornographic in the larger Jamesonian meaning. Though story and characterization are in fact more important for the aphrodisiacal effects of the sex film than is often lazily assumed, the visual dimension is overwhelmingly more important than any other. Much the same is true of the monster movie. In some ways, indeed, the sex film and the monster movie represent opposite poles of the cinematic experience as defined by the enraptured gaze of the viewer before the visible spectacle. In the former case, one contemplates images of that which is ardently desired but unavailable in real life (*intrinsically* unavailable, since, in all but the crudest sex films, the images on view are significantly different from what the actresses and actors would look like off screen). In the latter case, by contrast, the images are of that which does not exist in real life and would be rejected with horror if it did. Whereas the sex film compensates for a felt deficiency in reality, the monster movie adds to reality something that can be enjoyed only by virtue of its nonexistence. In evaluating monster movies, then, we must attend above all to the quality of the monstrous image and its ability to stimulate that peculiarly aesthetic variety of terror that is accompanied by the rational certainty, on the viewer's part, that one is in no actual danger.

With the possible exception of King Kong, Godzilla is surely the most visually memorable monster in cinematic history. He first appeared on American screens in Terry Morse's *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* (1956), which represents something between a re-editing and a remake of Ishiro Honda's Japanese film *Gojira* (1954). (In the credits to the American film, Honda is listed as co-director with Morse.) Morse altered the Japanese original in several ways. Honda's film—made less than a decade after the real-life devastation of Tokyo by firebombing and of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by nuclear bombing—is insistently political, with frequent references not only to the horrors of the Second World War but also to the continuing dangers posed by American explosions of hydrogen bombs in the Pacific. While some on the Japanese left are said to have found *Gojira* insufficiently anti-American, it was clearly much *too* anti-American—or at least too anti-nuclear—for Hollywood, which stripped nearly all the political content from *Godzilla* (though Morse's film retains the explanation that nuclear testing was responsible for awakening the giant monster from his ancient slumber at the bottom of the ocean). The American film also adds, as its central human character, an American journalist named Steve Martin, played by Raymond Burr, just two years after Burr's triumph as the terrifying wife-killer Lars Thorwald in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, and one year before he began his defining role of Perry Mason—who, indeed, seems somewhat prefigured in Steve Martin. Martin turns up in Japan almost by accident and improbably manages to insert himself into the middle of all the *Godzilla* action.

In both the Morse and the Honda films, however, there is no question but that the real star is the title character. Admittedly, the special effects are not particularly sophisticated even by the standards of the 1950s: Gojira/Godzilla is typically an actor dressed in a lizard costume who goes around crushing tiny cardboard buildings. But Honda's cinematography, for all its technical crudity, retains considerable power—"pornographic" power in Jameson's sense—even more than half a century later. As the enormous monster devastates much of Tokyo, smashing structures and killing innumerable inhabitants, anyone capable of the Coleridgean "suspension of disbelief" that all movies—and especially all monster movies—require should be able to thrill to the terror that such a thing would create. To be sure, for the first viewers the terror was considerably enhanced by the historical moment, when not only was the Second World War fresh in everyone's memory but some of the tensest anxieties of the Cold War were ongoing. *Gojira* repeatedly reminds Japanese audiences of what had happened to their country in 1945, while Americans, watching *Godzilla*, could hardly help but imagine what Soviet hydrogen bombs (the first of which had been tested in 1953) could do to their own nation's cities.

Honda's and Morse's work has been followed by almost countless remakes, sequels, parodies, and other iterations of its basic theme. Like Frankenstein and Dracula, like Superman and King Kong, like Sherlock Holmes and James Bond, *Godzilla* has

transcended any particular text and become a mega-textual presence in our culture. Though I am by no means familiar with all the pertinent cinematic (and other) representations—keeping up with all the versions of *Godzilla* would be almost a full-fledged scholarly specialty—I suspect that in some ways the best *Godzilla* of all may possibly be the latest, in the 2014 film by the young British director Gareth Edwards. Edwards was previously best known for *Monsters* (2010), a low-budget and rather underrated science-fiction adventure film. The title of *Monsters* is partly ironic, and, though the film features strange-looking alien creatures from outer space, it is not at all a monster movie in the classic sense. But Edwards's *Godzilla* most certainly is.

Edwards has considerably reworked the Honda/Morse source material, but he has also retained many of its most significant motifs. The nuclear theme is maintained, and is in fact considerably more prominent and elaborate than before; nuclear power plants and nuclear waste as well as nuclear weaponry are integral to Edwards's narrative. The Japanese provenance of *Godzilla* is reflected in the way that an important part of the new film's back-story takes place in Japan; and also in the way that the world's foremost scientific expert on *Godzilla* appears to be a Japanese scientist (played by Ken Watanabe) who—loyal, presumably, to the name coined by his compatriot Ishiro Honda—refers to the huge lizard as *Gojira*. But the main action of the film shifts to the United States. Now it is not Tokyo that is ravaged but several American cities that are particularly known for their cultures of pleasure and holiday-making: Honolulu, Las Vegas, and San Francisco. Another revision of the original is that, while *Gojira*/*Godzilla* is, for Honda and Morse, an absolute singularity—utterly unlike any other creature known to exist on earth—Edwards adds a pair of new, similarly enormous monsters, called MUTOs (the acronym stands for "massive unidentified terrestrial organism"). The MUTOs look somewhat like a cross between staggeringly gigantic insects and the latest super secret warplanes that one imagines the Pentagon to have on its drawing boards; and they give *Godzilla* someone his own size to pick on.

The most important element of the new *Godzilla* is, naturally, *Godzilla* himself. With budgets and digital effects at his disposal that Honda and Morse could scarcely have dreamed of, Edwards has fashioned a monstrous image that is bound to stay in the memory after numerous characters and plot twists have been forgotten. The first-time viewer may be surprised to find that *Godzilla* does not make an appearance until the movie is half over, and even by the end has had—I would estimate—significantly less screen time, proportionately, than in the Honda or Morse films. But the way the film allows us to gaze at *Godzilla* only sparingly quickens our appetite to see as much of him as possible; and our rapt contemplation of the absolute monster is thus enhanced. The "pornographic" force of the image is as powerful as any image in any recent monster movie I can think of. Edwards's *Godzilla* resembles Honda's man in a lizard suit, but is orders of magnitude more plausible and terrifying. For me, *Godzilla*'s attack on a MUTO with his radioactive fire breath constitutes the movie's most unforgettable "money shot": a term that, significantly, derives from the hard-core sex pornography industry but that is now commonly used to describe the sort of image in any film for which the paying customers are willing to lay down their money.

This latest *Godzilla* has, however, a sublimity that is intellectual as well as purely visual. Though the film features many effective shots of cities being devastated and terrorized—how could one make a *Godzilla* film without such images?—most of the terror and devastation is not, in fact, the work of *Godzilla* himself. It is the MUTOs that do most of the damage; and the ultimate significance of the enormous lizard, in comparison to the original source material, is shifted in a particularly interesting way. It turns out that, in the "balance of nature"—an ecological concept dear to the Watanabe character, Dr. Ishiro Serizawa, though not to the US military officials that Dr. Serizawa tries to advise—*Godzilla* is not only the MUTOs' natural predator but also the only force on earth capable of dealing with them. Though the film prominently features a great deal of American military hardware and a great many American military personnel—all commanded, with appropriate steely determination, by a US Navy admiral played by David Strathairn—all the troops, with all their guns and bombs, turn out to be useless against the MUTOs. It is *Godzilla* who defeats them. After the MUTOs have been disposed of, and *Godzilla* is seen returning to his underwater home, a San Francisco television news broadcast quotes Terry Morse's old tag line while also seriously revising its significance: *Godzilla* is described, in large letters across the bottom of the TV screen, not only as "king of the monsters" but also as the "savior of our city." Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that *Godzilla*, though a monster, is somehow "our" monster. The battle between *Godzilla* and the MUTOs takes place on a level both literally and figuratively far above the heads of men and women, with perfect indifference toward *homo sapiens*. Whereas, in the Honda/Morse original, humanity is capable of stirring up great trouble but also of then dealing with it, in the new film the world is governed by forces compared to which our species seems insignificant. For Gareth Edwards (as for Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex* 25 centuries earlier), humanity is emphatically *not* what the pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras proclaimed us to be: "the measure of all things." Edwards has produced what must be the first post-humanist version of *Godzilla*.



## ADVISOR AGREEMENT STARTLES A&M STUDENT SUPPORTERS



Experts in student retention and other enthusiasts for LAGRAD Act compliance enjoy bantering about “high-impact activities”: those co- and extra-curricular engagements that correlate with student success at the college level. According to the high-impactors, participation in clubs, sports, and public service increase the likelihood that a student will feel part of a learning community in which persistence draws rewards. Other aphorists, however, opine that talk is cheap, or at least less expensive than liability insurance. So it is that faculty participation in high-impact activities itself sustained a brutal impact in the form of a “revised advisor agreement” that circulated around the LSU A&M campus. Those who sponsor, advise, or support any organized student activities reeled in amazement when reading through a four-page “agreement” reporting that insurance coverage for advisors is minimal or non-existent; that faculty helpers to student groups must perform a huge inventories of duties and diligences; and that participating in student activities exposes colleagues to risk. Noting that no faculty member in his or her right mind would sign such a document, the LSU A&M Faculty Senate immediately opened a dialogue with the university regarding an untenable situation in which faculty must stand down from the support of student life. The *Newsletter* will report developments as they emerge.

(LATE-BREAKING NEWS: As we go to press, LSU A&M Risk Management expert Brian Nichols reports that, owing to success in meeting the LaGrad Act targets, LSU A&M will, in June 2015, become independent from the State Office of Risk Management and will be able to select and manage its own insurance. Brian reports that he feels certain that insurance for faculty advisors to student groups can be provided. Great job, Brian! Until June, everyone, please be careful!)

## NEW COMMISH ENWRAPS OPPORTUNITY IN MYSTERY



Joseph C Rallo

Those who have had the pleasure and opportunity to meet Joseph Rallo, the incoming Commissioner of Higher Education, have found him extremely personable as well as conversational. Combining the physique of a varsity tennis player with the steely but poised and energetically competent demeanor of a Marissa Mayer or Steve Ballmer, Rallo seems to exude confidence and a kind of nervous tractability—a readiness to engage. Yet mysteries remain about the man who, until recently, roamed the dusty streets of Lubbock. One wonders, for example, why, in a state such as ours, with its extraordinarily high ratio of military to civilian citizens, Rallo’s CV should carefully enwrap, in the mist of circumlocution, that fact that he served as an officer in the Air Force

as well as simply happening to teach in the airborne academy in Colorado Springs; one also wonders what is meant by a CV heading reading “languages” in which “French and Italian” are mentioned without any indication of fluency level; and one cannot help but note the amusing convergence of the publishing record of this historian of Russian oligarchies with the obscure, Kremlesque governance style of the otherwise all-American Regents. Yet the aura of opportunity surrounds this unknown arch-administrator. For the first time since Evangeline sailed into Abbeville, we have a Commissioner who is at least nominally trained in a humanities discipline and who has experience in the promotion of foreign language education. With Rallo, we also acquire an advocate for international education. And, of course, we pick up an exponent of aviation in a state that gave us Flying Tiger Claire Chennault but which, of late, has bungled every aviation initiative, whether the attraction of Hawker-Beechcraft to Baton Rouge or the creation of a high-tech workforce pertinent to the new aviation industries coming to Lake Charles. As Rallo comes out of the gate, educational handicappers around the state will be looking for some early breakaway moves.

## HOWARD HOMERS IN ENROLLMENT SERIES, INVOKES INFIELD PREPOSITION RULE



New LSUA logo uplifts everything from Deans to doormats

The faculty-friendly and quietly industrious new Chancellor of LSUA, Dan Howard, has scored two big runs on the diamond of a campus that bejewels Route 71. Confronted with declining enrollments, Howard has opened his era by unveiling an astounding [twenty-one percent increase](#) in enrollment, which should prove, once and for all, that popular as well as fortune opinion favors (a) live rather than online education and (b) Chancellors who respect faculty and students. Howard’s second big play was a classic switcheroo: the ditching of the old-fashioned “in” in favor of the aristocratic “of” so as to produce “LSU of Alexandria” (adding italicization to that classy little word so as not to let anyone miss it). Fans of aristocracy know that the best folks have an “of” in their name, as in “Ludwig von Beethoven” or “Armand Jean *du* Plessis, Cardinal-Duke *of* Richelieu and *of* Fronsac.” Inventively inverting, Howard even redeemed the good old doormat from opprobrium. As if to let us know that no one will ever be floormatted in Alexandria, the new foot-wiping apparatus at LSUA also carries this uplifting logo, making those eager for learning light on their curricular feet—veritable Mercuries of learning. Congratulations to Dan Howard for another series of victories.



LSUA Chancellor Dan Howard

## SLAM-DUNKER SALVATORE TAKES DOWN THE NET

Regular readers of the *Newsletter* are familiar with the exploits of LSUS faculty member and faculty governance supporter Brian Salvatore, whose “green” projects range from the installation of solar panels to the exploration of ecologically sound transportation and on to the reform of university energy policies. Salvatore has scored another basket with his latest editorial in *The Shreveport Times*. Salvatore, in his [editorial](#), blasts potential changes to the practice of “net metering,” by the Louisiana Public Service Commission, whereby utility companies may no longer allow customers who produce energy from alternative sources to send excess power back to the power grid. The elimination of fair net metering practices would hinder not only homeowners, but also businesses and universities, from producing clean energy from alternative sources.



Brian Salvatore, The Green Man of Caddo Parish



# 2014 FALL TECH SHARE- CALL FOR PRESENTERS

## SAVE THE DATE!



**I**TS will be collaborating with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to host the 2014 Fall Faculty Tech Share. All LSU faculty, staff and students are invited to attend!

**T**ech Shares are events designed to showcase the rich variety of academic technologies utilized at LSU. They serve to connect and enable faculty, students, and staff who use, or who might potentially use, specific technologies to find new and innovative solutions to academic challenges. Each Tech Share will be hosted by Information Technology Services in collaboration with a college or colleges from which faculty and students will demonstrate how they leverage technology in their teaching, learning, and research. Tech Shares will provide excellent opportunities for participants to share their successes as well as to learn from their peers and constituents.

**S**o, if any faculty or students within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences are interested in presenting at the Tech Share, please contact Hala Esmail at [hesmail1@lsu.edu](mailto:hesmail1@lsu.edu).

## CAZES PIONEERS COWORKER PRIDE

Service on the staff of Louisiana public universities can be a labor of unrequited love. Toiling away in aging, poorly lit, and improperly designed buildings, staff members usually try to do the best that they can for the universities that they admire with minimal tools while soaking up the misdirected anger of their clients. Recognizing the crisis in pride and team spirit that inevitably emerges from long-term neglect, LSU A&M Accounting Services Manager Maria Cazes recently teamed with Accounting Services leader Donna Torres to produce the first annual staff meeting for members of the LSU A&M FAS brigade. Reported to have been a smashing success, the reception celebrated employee service, whether the long labors of new retirees or the arrival of an abundance of new helpers during the budding reign of Finance and Accounting Services Vice-President Dan Layzell. Taking transparency to a level that would make Windex jealous, Cazes and her collaborators created a veritable centerpiece of a [PowerPoint presentation](#) that recounts the formidable recent achievements of the business wing at the Agricultural and Mechanical campus: huge rebates from the procurement card; service on the Staff Senate; big-money bonds for the recreation facility and for student life; raises for LSU A&M employees; upgrading of the procurement system; and much, much more! Congratulations to Maria and her friends for engaging the university community in the economic processes that sustain the life of the mind.



## MCNEESE BRANDING BONANZA

As the search for suitably festive, memorially monumental round numbers continues, McNeese State University is finding new branding opportunities in its achievement of the three-quarter century mark. As it celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary, McNeese is releasing a dazzling array of logo wear and branded items, items that combine campus-related images and icons in new and occasionally unexpected ways. The famous “cowboy” silhouettes and statues that have for so long spangled the Calcasieu campus seem to be giving way to the rather more sedentary statue of old Mr. McNeese, the eponymous founder; meanwhile, commercial arts students have been challenged, through assorted competitions, to re-imagine McNeese’s emblems. Those who occasionally cruise Ryan Street will enjoy the new mouse pad featuring Kaufman Hall as well as the radiant t-shirt that blazons the new motto, “celebrating the past, pioneering the future.” Philosophers will remember that St. Augustine identified three times—past, present, and future—but will suppose that McNeese officials are hoping that the unmentioned, grim *present* of higher education will only temporarily sandwich itself between a better past and a promising future.



McNeese releases new selection of logo mementos

## THIS TIME I DON'T NEED A DRINK: THE SAD CASE OF KAUFMAN HALL

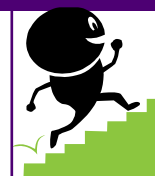
If there were ever a case to explain why reform is required in the capital outlay system that governs the repair and construction of campus buildings, it is the sad tale of Kaufman Hall, the historic WPA-era structure that, long ago, provided the germ for the pearl, nay, the oyster that is McNeese.

With the best intentions, McNeese President Philip Williams and his team have tried, tried, and tried again to put that fine example of provincial art deco into something resembling good repair. The first attempt was counteracted by the eruption of improperly installed pipes, sending water sailing into the basement; now, that second wave of repairs has been followed by the more elevated tsunami of roof leaks. Water collectors are reportedly stationed around the top floor. It doesn't require a McNeese degree in construction management to recognize that, if the state capital outlay had allowed for the repair of the roof along with the renovation of the building, the cost of a third round of patches could have been avoided.



## LSU TO REVAMP PS-36

One of the great achievements of LSU faculty governance was the commissioning in 2009 of PS-36, the updated and upgraded policy governing promotion, tenure, and evaluation. PS-36, like the faculty that it governs, is, if not a living, then surely a responsive and metamorphic document. Over the years since its installation, new avenues to achievement have opened and new institutional priorities—such as an enhanced commitment to academic freedom and a push for internationalization—have emerged. In consultation with the LSU A&M Faculty Senate, the LSU administration has embarked on an ambitious program to revise and update PS-36 and to take into account a host of issues ranging from rewards for promoting service learning to commercialization of intellectual property. The LSU Faculty Senate Executive Committee has asked former AAUP Chapter President Brooks Ellwood to serve as its delegate to a blue-ribbon University committee charged with drafting the PS-36 revisions, revisions which will also be considered by the full faculty.



## SYSTEM SIDES WITH DRAGON AGAINST ST. GEORGE

LSU Educators across the state are watching the efforts of the St. George crusaders, who seek to incorporate a proposed new city of St. George within the boundaries of East Baton Rouge Parish (but outside the confines of the city of Baton Rouge). In an unusually bold move, the LSU System has petitioned Baton Rouge for the annexation of all its properties, many of which cut across the proposed new boundaries. More than a few experts predict devastating consequences for the East Baton Rouge School System, which supplies more than a few students to Louisiana colleges and universities, if the prosperous southeastern segment of East Baton Rouge Parish should become a breakaway republic. It appears that the LSU System has recognized that the dragon has some merits and that St. George isn't all that he's cracked up to be.





## ALEXANDRIA SUMMIT DRAWS GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE

The centrality of the quarterly ALFS (Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates) "Summit Meetings" in Alexandria involves more than their geographical location in the middle of our state. Increasingly viewed as the first stop on the way to connecting with Louisiana cognoscenti, the Alexandria meetings continue to draw high-level dignitaries who seek change in Louisiana higher education. The early autumn ALFS meeting was no exception to this refreshing rule. Keynoting the event was no less than John Bel Edwards, widely recognized as the leader among potential Democrat candidates for governor. Despite ours being an era in which slogans often supplant substance, candidate Edwards regaled summit participants with a litany of creative thoughts, ideas, and proposals. Edwards's topics included tax laws that encourage the transition from the hydrocarbon economy to its eventual successor; faculty representatives on the system management and Regents boards; the absurdity of predictable unanimous votes by higher education management boards; the minuses as well as the pluses of the WISE program; recognition of tuition as a form of taxation; ways for the improvement of faculty retirement plans; and the dubious merit of the TOPS program, especially with regard to the obstacles that this program creates when it comes to granting tuition authority to the campuses.

Although he filled the morning session with wit and wisdom, John Bel Edwards was not the only feature on a rich Alexandria agenda. LSU of Alexandria Chancellor Dan Howard offered his formidable celerity and charm in the form of an update on advances at LSUA and reflections on the early days of a new Chancellor. Lynn Lamotte of the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans reported on the high-profile and yet invisible world of the medical campuses, offering insights into the struggles of those who seek increased faculty input into regimes governed as often by fundraising needs as by sound democratic principles. Thomas Miller, the hardy champion of faculty governance at beleaguered Southern University, provided an update concerning the "crisis on the bluff": the continuing governance turmoil on the largest Southern and across the Southern System. Sonya Hester, the dynamic new leader of the Southern University in Shreveport Faculty Senate, recounted her attempts to revitalize a previously moribund faculty governance apparatus and to develop a two-year plan for faculty empowerment. Hester amazed the Alexandria ensemble by unveiling a detailed but easily interpretable, color-coded grid that had so clearly articulated salary inequities that it produced speedy and decisive raises for a large number of mistreated SUSLA faculty members. And Kevin Cope rounded off the afternoon with an update concerning the crisis at the Office of Group Benefits, offering a tutorial on faults in the financing of medical insurance in Louisiana.

The next Alexandria Summit will take place in early December and will feature Louisiana Community and Technical Colleges System President Monty Sullivan.



Medical campus expert Lynn Lamotte speaks at the Alexandria Summit



Representative John Bel Edwards addresses Alexandria Summit participants

## WIDE-OPEN SECRECY: THE OPEN AND THE SHUT IN THE COMMISSIONER SEARCH

If there were ever a study in Louisiana's ambivalent attitude toward expertise, the final days of the search for a Commissioner of Higher Education surely provided that study. On one hand, the perennial ringmaster of the Regents, Tom Layzell, demonstrated his usual poise, wit, ingenuity, and commitment to equitable management practices by ensuring, through careful diplomacy, that faculty representatives participated in several of the stages of the Commissioner search, including the final round of interviews. Retraining the Regents, ambassador-cum-instructor Layzell taught this odd assembly of gubernatorial appointees that listening to faculty might be a good idea, both with respect to obtaining input from the front lines and also with respect to faculty morale, which would benefit from at least the hint of participation. In a genuine "first," inventive Layzell arranged for three experienced faculty members—one from a four-year research institution; one from a two-year institution; and one from an HBCU—to meet with all three of the finalists. Layzell also earned kudos for his insistence that interviews occur in a single bundle, on a schedule suitable for busy faculty members. Amazingly, this demand healthily energized the usually somber Regents office as candidates and interviewing committees moved briskly from room to room while carefully avoiding one another, all in choreographic stage-blocking that recalled a West End bedroom comedy, with the shuttling of parties between chambers, the rapid opening and closing of doors, and the imminent fear of mutual discovery that characterize that delightful genre!

Layzell's best efforts, of course, were exerted against the behemoth of inertia that is the Board of Regents. A perfect process could not materialize, no more than a scuba diving school could prosper in the arid Sahara. Although the candidates followed the usual multi-level itinerary among a menagerie of stakeholders and although dozens of evaluation sheets were filed, the Regents arrived at their decision less than twenty-four hours after the interviews concluded, raising questions about the depth of thought and responsiveness to input that may have been as much ceremonial as substantial. It being unlikely that the Pantagruelian Regents missed lunch, dinner, or nap time, no more than ten or twelve hours of reflection, let alone poll analysis, could have occurred. Fortunately, the inveterate Tom Layzell remains on-call and is expected to offer frequent assistance with the transition and the establishment of the new regime.





## US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ISSUES REPORT CARD ON LA HIGHER EDUCATION

### LEADERS [ & ] LAGGARDS

A State-by-State Report Card on  
Public Postsecondary Education

*News-*  
*letter* reader Bernard  
Gallagher  
of Alexandria keeps  
his eye on

Washington and indeed on all the policy centers of our land. The result: discovery of the updated national Chamber report card on state higher education. Available in an interactive, map- and table-based format or as a PDF document, the [report](#) gives Louisiana an “F” in student access and success and a “D” in transparency and accountability; the highest grade on this reform-school report card is an “A” in policy environment as seen from the perspective of business. The report provides a useful antidote to those who regard business and well-financed higher education as antithetical, for it repeatedly shows that business wants an educated clientele. Appreciations to Bernard for bringing this item to the attention of *News-letter* staffers.

## RECRUITING BILLBOARD BATTLE BLAZES

Several months have passed since the *Newsletter* drew attention to an eruption of billboards scattered around the state, the purpose of which was to attract eligible students from one region to campuses in another venue. Spotted everywhere from northerly Interstate 20 to the far corners of southerly Interstate 10, these billboards egged on students to transfer from one venue to another in a continual rotation of migrant learners. It appears that the billboard war, which seemed to have gone into a truce or dormancy, has exploded again. Just east of exit 115 on Interstate 10, for example, hovers a costly billboard urging students to make a ninety-degree left turn and to head up to the University of Louisiana in Monroe. Featuring slightly militaristic imagery—a screaming red war-eagle—the billboard seems to be strategically positioned to catch students leaving the University of Louisiana at Lafayette before they reach rival LSU A&M. Meanwhile, further north, a few miles up the road from Alexandria, stands what is probably the most unattractive and unimaginative billboard of all time, a stark white placard with plain blue lettering advising would-be students that Northwestern University is a place where leaders are produced. This ultimate plain-vanilla billboard will probably come as a surprise to the Physics faculty members at Northwestern who, in exchange for their leadership in science teaching, were defrocked of tenure and unceremoniously shown the door.



*LSUnited  
and  
the Faculty Senate:  
together watching out  
for your interests*

### THE STATUS OF FACULTY BENEFITS

**A forum addressing the question:  
What has happened to our health care and retirement plans?**

#### **Panelists:**

**JOHN BEL EDWARDS, member of the LA House of Representatives and gubernatorial candidate**

**KEVIN COPE, president of the LSU Faculty Senate**

**STUART IRVINE, professor of Religious Studies and representative of LSUnited**

**DAYNE SHERMAN, professor of Library Science, Southeastern Louisiana University, editor of “Talk about the South” blog**

**JAMES KIRYLO, president of the Southeastern Louisiana University Faculty Senate**

**Time and place:  
November 18 (Tuesday), 3:00 pm  
LSU Union, Vieux Carré**

*Refreshments will be provided.*

# Lifestyle Feature



Autumn is the season of crispiness: of crinkling leaves, of crunchy apples, and of crisp steps during cooling forest walks. With autumn also comes renewed appetite. All of those foods that lost their savor during the satiating summer suddenly stimulate those gourmets who might need a few more calories to stay alive at sixty than at ninety degrees. Among the crispy treats that reacquire their appeal once the humidity passes is that bagged

wonder, the potato chip, which, since the time of its first advocate, Laura Scudder, has destroyed more diets, as the proverb has it, “than Heinz pickles got warts.”

Time was when choosing potato chips was easy: when Bell, Frito-Lay, Scudder, and a few freebooters controlled the entire potato chip market. Today, however, we have reached at least the third or fourth generation of potato chip manufacturers, many of them falling under the desirable “boutique” heading. No longer does one chip fit all. Even major producers release myriad versions and flavors of chips. [One industry web site](#) reckons that there are currently 1,483 varieties of chip from 271 providers in distribution.

Knowing that academic people have little spare time and that they travel far and wide, the *Newsletter* lifestyle feature writers have not attempted to climb the craggy mountain comprised of those thousand-plus jagged chips. Rather, having experienced the bewilderment arising from the prospect of a long aisle of chips, they seek to provide insights into the top twelve boutique or semi-boutique chips as well as to concentrate on the plain, traditional chip rather than their heavily flavored cousins. Our staffers have also chosen to focus on chips that enjoy wide if not nationwide distribution in the hope that their guide may be useful everywhere.

Potato chips fall into categories not only on the basis of flavor or ingredients but also with respect to denomination. There being only so many variations on the chip possible, many manufacturers try to personalize their offerings by associating them with the forenames of persons who may or may not exist and who usually seem to lack a surname (an honored tradition, given that no one knows whether that good old dummy, Howdy-Doody, had a last name, or whether “mentalist” Kreskin uses his family or personal moniker). Among the best of the forename-only chips is the modestly packaged [Charles Chips](#) (*sic*; no genitive or apostrophe used). Charles Chips deploys a retro, 1940s look and even suggests, through its frequent use of images of old-timey delivery wagons, that its cleanly-appareled men might bring chips directly to your doorstep. Charles Chips evidence a slight puffiness that relieves their familiarity with a hint of texture and which nicely balances their overall thin cut; they pop and crunch in the mouth but then deliver a soft hint of fresh potato. Better still, Charles Chips hit the salt quota precisely, letting the enjoyer know that he or she is munching a savory treat but getting out of the way of the vegetable, earthy taste while foregrounding the pleasing unctuousness of the trace of the fine cottonseed oil in which these chips are prepared.

A close runner-up for Charles Chips is [Michael Season’s](#) (this time with only the genitive and no follow-on substantive), which, despite having been gobbled up by Manhattan Brands, seems to

have managed to maintain its quality and improve its distribution. The novelty of Michael Season’s chips is the superiority of their putatively “reduced fat” version to the ordinary edition.

These remarkable, ultra-thin chips present an initial pleasing crunch then melt away in a pleasant fusion of earthy and light overtone flavors. Michael Season’s chips, in their extreme thinness and lightness, belong (probably inadvertently) to the European genre of chips as represented by Funny Frisch (see below). They suggest the light, floral oils such as sunflower-rich Europe provides to its kettle artisans. The latest entrant in the forename category is [Jackson’s Honest Potato Chips](#), which are admittedly delicious but which strike a strange note by using the proprietors’ diseased child as a case study of the alleged healing power of superior oils. Its reputation resting on the regenerative abilities of coconut oil, this chip will appeal to two disparate crowds: those who enjoy fine tastes and also those who lack suspicion when it comes to the cult of profitable disability (or maybe those who would like to eat their way to health).

To a second category belong those potato chips that come to market not under a forename but under a surname. These chips generally evidence even less of a connection with the proprietor or inventor or cook than do the “forename” chips; rather, the often imaginary surname is carefully confected to conjure an array of appetite-stimulating associations. Most successful in this art is surely [Tyrrell’s](#), which markets its chips in bags bearing nostalgic photos from the heyday of the English leisure class or, alternatively, from highly stylized pub interiors, thereby touching on American sentimentality concerning the old British Empire. Tyrrell’s makes its claim to fame through the use of English, specifically Herefordshire, potatoes and through the limitation of its chip size (owing to the diminutive profile of the aforementioned specialist spuds). Tyrrell’s chips do indeed offer a mild but rich, minimally salted flavor. Better, they come with at least small bit of their rind, to pleasing visual effect. A distant but worthy competitor among the surname chips is local [Zapps](#), the self-styled “little chippery from Gramercy,” whose plant along the Airline Highway is within easy driving distance of Baton Rouge. At one time, Zapps was the leader in novelty potato chips but has somehow slipped behind the times. Its ferociously hard chips have a certain panache and devilish insouciance about them, but its product sourcing cannot compete with the health-conscious—or perhaps health-obsessed—pitches of the more modern snacks.



(Continued on page 10)





(Continued from page 9)

The third category of chip is that which plays upon geographical affiliation. The undisputed leader in this category would be [Cape Cod Chips](#), which outdoes Zapps by offering a slightly firm chip that evidences some of the smoothness found in Michael Season's delicate bites. Cape Cod, which has recently been absorbed by food holding company giant Snyder's, may be in the midst of an identity crisis. Its web site has resorted to explaining that it transforms potatoes, oil, and salt into delicious chips, a statement that is scarcely the work of a creative genius—but, for the nonce, it hits the bull's-eye center of the classic chip flavor and texture profile. Somewhat less successful is [Boulder Canyon](#), which seems to invoke a venue somewhere in wild Colorado but which never identifies any particular chasm nor, for that matter, any particular set of boulders. As its name suggests, Boulder, despite its endorsements from Rachel Ray and its commitment to earth-friendly ingredients, has yet to overcome a certain darkness and heaviness that befits its name and that may, admittedly, appeal to those seeking a truly hearty bite.

Three major, next-generation chips affiliate themselves with evocative objects, valued processes, or adjectival states. [Kettle Chips](#), another west-coast former start-up, identifies no particular cauldron but presents itself as a stew of ecological and progressive values ranging from a commitment to sustainable energy sources to the cultivation of (somewhat generalized) leadership. Kettle, like Cape Cod, puts out a good, solid, all-around chip, but it seems to be suffering from a profusion of flavored brands that may be distracting from its core product. Its somewhat opaque packaging looks rather less fresh than the bundles of other chippers. [Earth Balance Chips](#), a small division of a large provider of a whole line of "health" foods, intones the vegan mantra but delivers a pleasant, light, warm-weather sort of chip, a chip not distinguished by any grand attributes but one which makes a perfect accompaniment for a hearty sandwich that a sturdier chip might overload. By contrast, the daringly named Dirty Potato Chips make no ecological or otherwise ideological claims at all de-

spite the suggestion that the good earth might be in play. Now owned by Zapps, Dirty Chips has long specialized in the dark flavor that also characterizes Kettle snacks, a flavor that may appeal to those seeking less of a farm-to-table than a soil-to-table experience.

No review of designer potato chips would be complete without a few kudos to the commercial giants who created the cult of potato chips and to the European manufacturers who followed suit. Of the early potato chip cookers who survive to this day, the biggest surprise is [Lay's](#), now part of the Frito-Lay behemoth, which has shown an unexpected degree of survivability and that, despite its lack of anything even resembling a political, dietary, or emotional agenda, continues to produce a tasty chip. Although not a classic, pure chip, Lay's barbecue chips achieve an almost perfect balance of the savory, the sweet, and the aromatic. The oldsters out there will remember the Lay's jingle, "Bet You Can't Eat Just One," a conjecture that continues to ring true. On the other side of the Atlantic, one of the greatest lines of potato chips of all time emerges from humorously named German manufacturer [Funny Frisch](#). Whose expertise in thin slicing, discovery of fine sunflower oil, and precise salting rivals anything found in America. Fortunately, Funny Frisch products can be purchased from firms such as [German Deli](#).

Enjoy—for another future issue, all of the snack foods!



and stand by feature, in a of many if not other bagged

## QUALTRICS—Brand New this Year!

Starting Fall 2014, LSU has acquired a campus wide license of the Qualtrics Research Suite, which is now available for LSU faculty, staff, and students. Qualtrics is a web-based survey software tool that offers a wide array of question types, a well-designed survey development interface, and a powerful reporting engine. For more information about Qualtrics and to create an account, please visit [www.lsu.edu/qualtrics](http://www.lsu.edu/qualtrics).



## PERSONNEL ACTIONS: PHILANTHROPY DRIVING INEQUITY

For many years, the great hope of faculty who have been yearning for some sort of increase in their below-market compensation has been the anticipation that, sooner or later, the dozens, indeed hundreds of honorific professorships that presently languish unused might eventually be co-funded by the state, with the result that loyal but unheralded faculty might receive recognition in the form of a named professorship attached to supplemental compensation. A secondary hope among underpaid colleagues has been the expectation that private philanthropy will outpace state budgeting and that donated funds for named professorships will allow for an improvement in salary equity, especially in those fields with a smaller job market than fields in which private industry and funded research routinely provide extra cash.

Analysis of the October LSU System "Personnel Actions" tells quite a different story about compensation trends. Those actions contain the details of circa eighteen new honorific professorships. The first and most obvious trend is that ten of those eighteen professorships went to faculty in the Business School, where, presumably, the outside market is highest. Surprisingly, only two were handed out to colleagues, thus demonstrating that STEM disciplines scarcely corroborate the talk of the administration about the opportunity for income from the outside market. Although it is true that three members of the Music and Drama departments proceeded to persons in administrative roles, including the Dean of Agriculture (likewise, the one honorific allocated to a departmental chairperson). One of the B-School honorifics also went to an administrator. The latter trend is especially disturbing insofar as it suggests that the administration is breaking faith with donors by using funds earmarked as rewards for scholarship or for distinguished performance as bargaining chips in a bidding war over administrative personnel. One can only wonder whether a dean who depends on the administration for honors or other economic and vanity strokes will incline toward criticism or freethinking in policy matters.

The "Personnel Actions" also record a substantial raise of \$41,000.00 for an admittedly highly effective leader in a service unit of the big school adjacent to Tiger Stadium. Although retention of key administrators, especially those who provide basic infrastructure-related services, is a "must," this 21% raise can only raise eyebrows among faculty members, who must surely wonder why the administration can find substantial sums of money when it wants to but cannot seem to deliver the full 4% and 3% raises that it has advertised during the last two years. After all, \$40K per annum, over twenty years of service and with a 35% fringe, amounts to a whopping \$1.1 million dollars. Might it not be time for someone to develop a compensation policy that actually rewards, rather than transfers wealth from, those who have served long and honorably?



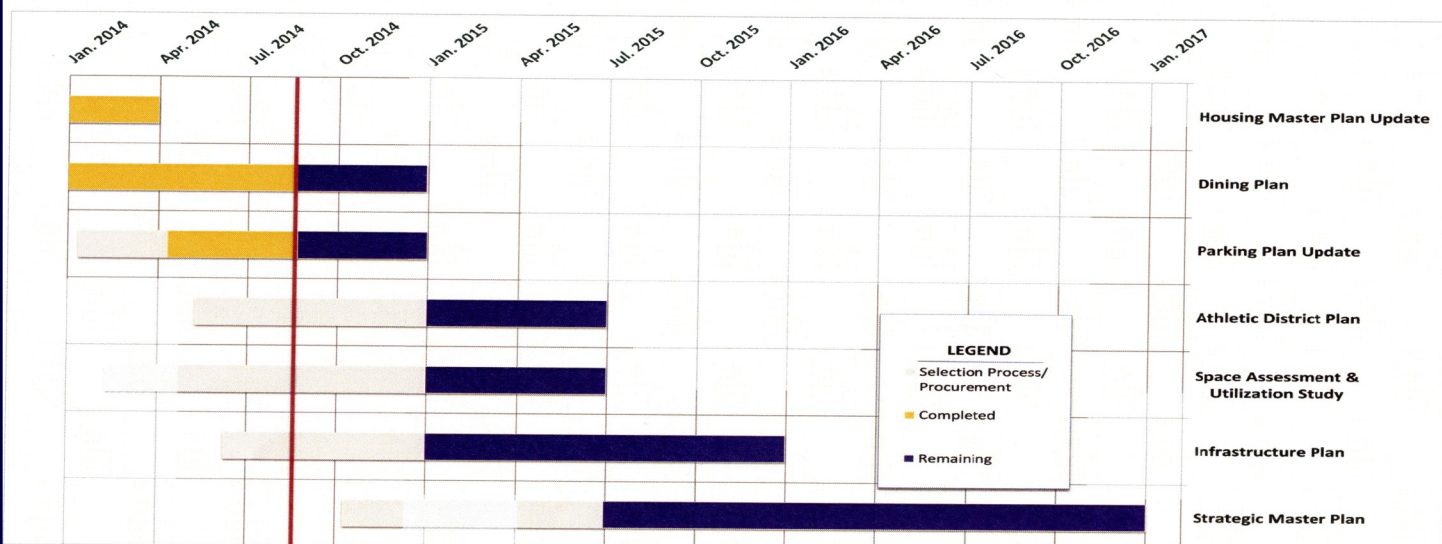
contain the details of circa eighteen first and most obvious trend is that ten of those eighteen professorships went to faculty in the Business School, where, presumably, the outside market is highest. Surprisingly, only two were handed out to colleagues, thus demonstrating that STEM disciplines scarcely corroborate the talk of the administration about the opportunity for income from the outside market. Although it is true that three members of the Music and Drama departments proceeded to persons in administrative roles, including the Dean of Agriculture (likewise, the one honorific allocated to a departmental chairperson). One of the B-School honorifics also went to an administrator.

## LSU FLIPS MASTER SWITCH, IGNITES PLANNING PROCESS

More than ten years have passed since the production of a master plan for the LSU A&M educational juggernaut. During that time, buildings have come and gone, the South Campus has expanded, pedestrianization has triumphed, and, in sum, the world has changed. In response and at long last, LSU officialdom has thrown the "go" switch for a new, multi-year master planning process, a project that will cover everything from dining to infrastructure and that will coordinate with a traffic, transportation, and parking master planning process that will run in parallel. Campus construction manager Roger Husser and traffic commodore Jeff Campbell will head an initiative that will include nearly two dozen representatives from assorted stakeholder groups, including, of course, the faculty.

(see chart below)

LSU MASTER PLAN UPDATE – PROPOSED TIMELINE



Time line for LSU master planning



## RECOGNITION REPLACES CONSENT IN DRUG POLICY PUBLICITY

Never tiring of its favorite nourishment, *compliance*, the Federal Government last year ordered higher education institutions to distribute to faculty a drug policy. On the LSU campuses, faculty who sought to use course management or other institutional software encountered an aggressive pop-up box that demanded not only reading of but consent to and agreement with this strangely mixed moral, legal, and political mandate. That demand created problems for those who, in conscience, could not agree with a policy characterized more by fanaticism and prohibitionism than by reasoning. This year, the pop-up consent box has again burst onto screens in thousands of university offices, but, thanks to the good sense of IT genius Sheri Thompson, the demand for agreement has subsided before a benign affirmation that the recipient has read the policy. Academic freedom thus remains intact even while the ghost of Carrie Nation keeps swinging her axe.



Sheri Thompson has exorcised the ghost  
of Carrie Nation

## ODDITY OF THE MONTH

From the medical campus in Shreveport (LSUHSC-S) comes word of the discovery that departments hiring colleagues from other campuses and departments immediately acquire the total sick, personal, vacation, and annual leave burden that the new hire may have accumulated over many years of service. The prospect of such a burden deters inter-campus mobility and collaboration while it also raises the prospect of age discrimination, departments and other units being reluctant to hire someone who, over many years of service, may have accumulated a substantial inventory of leave time. Faculty governance is on the case and has already consulted with Finance and Administrative Services top-banana Dan Layzell.



A Vital LSU! A Vital Community!

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- Securing regular, periodic raises for faculty
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## BOUNTIFUL BUZZ ANIMATES HRM



The rocketing ascent of HRM expert A. G. Monaco, author of the popular “A G Answers” column, to a kind of virtual responsibility for benefits throughout the

LSU System has set off a great wave, nay, a sonic boom of activity, a boom that gives real amplitude to the title of A G’s own newsletter, *Benefits Buzz*. In the latest issue of the *Buzz*, A G unveils a host of new benefits upgrades, improvements that will enhance the financial security of thousands of professionals working on LSU campuses. The latest batch of improvements includes a huge reduction in deductibles for dental plans; free eye exams for vision insurance subscribers; extended ceilings on the values of life insurance policies; a new critical illness plan; new accident insurance; and the administrative advantage conferred by the use of a single carrier to coordinate all the voluntary insurance. Congratulations to A G for lifting everyone to the next level of benefits bliss.

## SOUTHERN SENATE DEMANDS COMPENSATION POLICY

Readers of the *Newsletter* have followed with interest and admiration the courageous acts of the Southern University Faculty Senate, which, among many valorous deeds, has passed a vote of no confidence in Southern University System President Ronald Mason. The latest bold stroke by the Senators on the bluff is the passage of a resolution calling for a delay in salary increases for top-level administrators until such a time as a rational compensation policy that includes not only faculty but also deans and department chairs. It seems that more than a few mid-level Southern functionaries have been lured in to their posts with promises of raises that never materialized, all while salaries at the Vice-Chancellor level have continued their notorious ascent. A remarkable strategy of the Southern Faculty Senate resolution is its refusal to indulge in cliché demands for administrative salary reductions along with its demonstration that mid-level management (deans, chairs) also suffers from the drive to centralization and from the polarization of system and campus salaries. This strategy diffuses the claim that faculty members only seek to increase their salary and shows a providential care for Southern University as a whole.



Southern University Faculty Senate President Thomas Miller

## LSU ORED EMBRACES LOUISIANA CULTURAL IDENTITY

Everyone at LSU A&M and across the LSU System lauds the efforts of Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) Vice-Chancellor K. T. Valsaraj and of his Chief Staffer Matthew Lee to heighten the profile of the liberal arts in a fundraising world where the STEM disciplines walk tall. K. T.’s and Matt’s latest move to overcome the Philistinism of our petroleum-preoccupied universities was the relocation of the annual ORED retreat from a country club venue (where uniformly male oil executives picked up their golf carts from uniformly female, shorts-sporting chauffettes) to historic Houmas House, one of the most beautiful venues along the Mississippi River and home base of Chef Jeremy Langlois, who has cooked on the hit reality-contest show *Chopped* (Langlois hit the chopping block at the end of the second, entrée round, owing to mishandled grits and grillades). The ORED chiefs included numerous faculty advocates in the edifying festivities, which were widely hailed as a huge success. Congratulations to K. T. and Matt for their outreach efforts.



## CALCUTTA IN CADDO



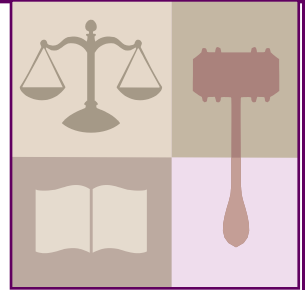
Long-time participants in faculty governance know well the extraordinary achievements of Sanjay Menon, one of the pioneering advocates for faculty governance at LSU in Shreveport. In addition to his continuing commitment to higher education policymaking, Sanjay has now taken leadership of the India Studies program at LSUS. Already his leadership is renovating the cultural scene in Caddo Parish. Most recently, Sanjay staged a spectacular evening of Indian classical music and dance in which flutists, vocalists, assorted accompanists, and toe-trippers dazzled a large audience. Applause to Sanjay for showing everyone the sometimes invisible face of transplanted south Asian culture and for increasing awareness of Indian contributions to Louisiana.



## LAWSUIT TARGETS RETIREMENT PLANS

Two colleagues have filed a lawsuit—specifically, a petition for a declaratory judgment—against the LSU Board of Supervisors and against the [Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana](#) (TRSL). Since the discovery, in 2009, of the diversion of funds from the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) to the paying down of the TRSL unfunded accrued liability (UAL), faculty governance officials have repeatedly asked university administrators for help in the repair of a retirement system that is the least generous and the most byzantine of the higher education pension plans in the nation. HB6, which set a floor to the “normal cost,” was admittedly a step forward. But it was only a minor step, and one that has not been fully implemented, that bill allowing university systems to delay full compliance until 2018 and also doing nothing to set benefits at levels comparable to those found at aspirational institutions. Faculty governance officials, in frustration and outrage, have quietly but systematically sought the help of *pro bono* legal counsel. Filed on September 25<sup>th</sup>, the petition for declaratory judgment asks the District Court to declare Louisiana universities out of compliance with rules governing exemptions from Social Security. It also asks the court to declare the imposition of an unfunded accrued (public) liability on a private retirement plan such as the ORP to be illegal. Those filing the petition will also ask the court to determine who is the employer of professors: a campus; a system; a state; or TRSL as a paid, outsourced manager of benefits.

The petition for a declaratory judgment is a major (and first) step forward in the attempt to halt the purloining of retirement monies that belong to faculty and to compel the state and its agencies to deal fairly with their employees. More to come!



## INTERNATIONAL RECRUITING FIRMS DAZZLE UNIVERSITY OFFICIALDOM

October opened on an itinerant note at LSU as A&M officialdom hosted formidable entourages from two firms specializing in the recruitment of international students. Both the evocatively named Shorelight Education and the rebus-denominated INTO⇒ fielded five-person panels for day-long encounters with faculty, administration, stakeholders, and just about anyone who might have considered a vacation in Tijuana or Timbuktu. Both Shorelight and INTO⇒ specialize in the discovery and recruitment of both undergraduate and graduate students in an assortment of nations, most of them in the “developing economy” category. These firms then handle the translocation of those students into the United States, provide year-long transition-acculturation-orientation-counseling programs, and manage remedial or, as they prefer, “readiness” programs that bring visiting students up to speed in basic skills such as language, writing, and reckoning.

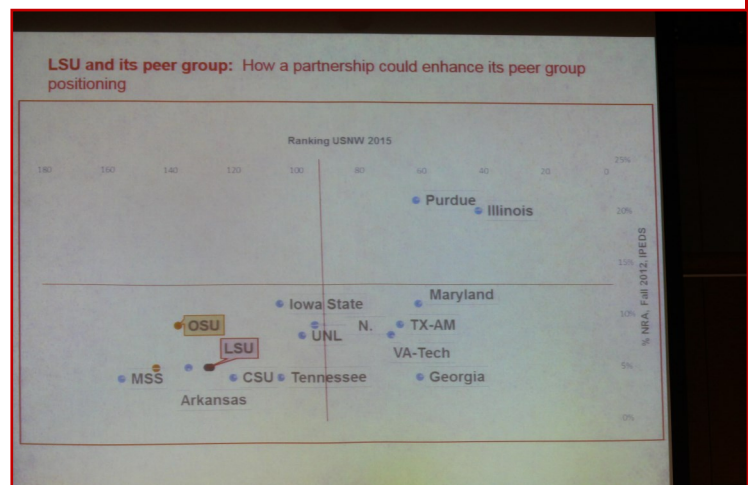
Overall, the two firms both evidenced formidable experience, albeit mostly in medium-sized institutions rather than in large research universities or across diverse higher education systems. Their aptitude proved slightly embarrassing insofar as the skill in educating diverse students proved better realized in private industry than in Louisiana public universities, where transition programs are few in number and slow in development. Questions did arise, however, about the less visible aspects of these firms and their operations. Who would evaluate the credentials of the persons who staff the transition and skills courses, and would they be paid salaries comparable with other highly trained professionals? How broad is the range of disciplinary interest among the incoming students, or would these programs only benefit the workforce-oriented fields (a question to one INTO⇒ official yielded a “trickle up” theory in which the growing wealth of foreign students would eventually stimulate interest in the arts and humanities)? Does recruitment occur across all social classes or political groups, or is the scarce hard currency in developing nations applied to the tuition expenses only of those already in the ruling class? Deliberations on these and many other questions remain underway. Compliments go to LSU Provost Stuart Bell for trying to strengthen the international connectedness of Louisiana Universities.



INTO⇒ officers seek adoption of their international recruitment service



Shorelight Education VP Basil Cleveland pitches international recruiting



LSU slips into the wrong quadrant in international engagement



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## A.G.'s Corner

LSU HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, CHIEF A. G. MONACO, ADDRESSES QUESTIONS ABOUT HRM AND "EMPLOYEES' LIVES" IN GENERAL. IF YOU HAVE A PRESSING HRM ISSUE FOR A G TO ADDRESS, PLEASE SEND YOUR QUERIES TO ENCOPE@LSU.EDU.

### The Letter

Dear A G,

This is a two-for-one question. I've just now heard that some HRM departments around Louisiana academe are offering Roth IRAs. I know that these differ from the voluntary 403(b) plans that have been available to faculty members for many years, but, to be honest, I don't quite know all the details of the differences. I do know that one kind of account is taxed at the outset, at the time of deposit, and the other at the time of withdrawal. Of greater concern is that I don't understand how to choose between the two options or whether to use both of them at the same time. I'm heading into the final third of my career—I'm 54 years old—and I already have about \$75,000.00 in a 403(b) plan in addition to my accumulated mandated retirement money in the Optional Retirement Plan; my current annual income is around \$85,000.00. Now the two-for-one part: I'm also trying to advise my young son, Masaharu, who is in his twenties, is just now starting a career as a math instructor, and is earning around \$40,000.00 per year at a regional campus, with only minimal savings to date. Could you give us the scoop on the Roth/403(b) comparison, and could you help us figure out which tax-diminished investments are best for us?

With thanks,  
KENJI in Bossier City



### The Response

Dear Kenji,

Did you know that Bossier City was once called Bennett's Bluff? It was named after William Bennett, who with his wife Mary Ciley and his business partner James Cane owned a plantation near the Red River. When Mr. Bennett died Mary kept the partnership alive by marrying Mr. Cane, which explains absolutely nothing about Roth IRAs, but I thought I would throw something out there for the history "buffs."

LSU has recently added the Roth IRA option to our 403b plans. We had been receiving feedback from faculty and staff about their interest in such plans and so we researched the matter and found that there is a growing interest in such plans nationwide. Our 403(b) vendors "jumped" at the opportunity to offer the option.

Aon Hewitt's "2014 Universe Benchmark Report" this past year showed that employees who are offered Roth options within their 401(k) or 403(b) plans were increasingly choosing the Roth option. Selection of the Roth was most prominent among the youngest of employees.

As to whether you should choose between the standard 403(b) accounts or a Roth account is really about personal preference and individual situations because there are a number of variables that would affect your decision. In most cases the decision to go Roth versus 403(b) comes down to taxes. You need to answer the question of whether you would be better off paying taxes on the money right now or at the point of retirement. Obviously if you expect your tax rate to be higher in the future, the Roth is your choice since the money you put into a Roth account is post tax and so earnings are tax sheltered.

Our friends at Fidelity who we recently have been brought back into the fold as a vendor for our 403(b) plan helped us put together this example of two people who are both 45 years old:

Jeb and Hillary both contribute \$5000 to their 403(b) plan both in the same year—Hillary to a traditional 403(b) plan and Jeb to a Roth 403(b) plan. They both decide they do not need the money until they are

75 years old. With tax rates and returns being equal, Hillary's initial contribution will have grown to \$27,404 after paying taxes at the time of withdrawal and Jeb will have \$38,061. Choosing the Roth option gave Jeb \$10,657 dollars more than Hillary.

But the numbers are a bit deceptive.... If Hillary had taken the \$1,400 she saved in taxes from her \$5,000 pre-tax contributions and invested that money in a taxable brokerage account (something we hope to offer soon through some of our 403(b) providers) that would have boosted her savings to \$35,444. Now that is still \$2616 short of Jeb's but of course there might have been other options available that could have returned more.

We know that people who expect tax levels to rise in the future find the Roth option a good one to pursue. We also know from the Aon-Hewitt report that younger employees prefer the Roth because their expectations are that they will either be in a higher tax bracket in the future due to increased earnings or they will see the tax rates increase over their long work life.

Keep in mind that even if the federal tax rates do not change, we see regular changes to the types of deductibles allowed that in an insidious way raise your taxes. Also keep in mind that your marginable tax rate is not just a function of your taxable income. Upon retirement you may move to a state with higher or lower state income tax levels or to a city that has a city income tax and that factor will also have a significant effect on your tax bill.

I think the answer to both parts of your question can be lumped together around the issue of taxation, but first let's provide some broad statements for the youngsters to consider.

(Continued on page 17)

To help with his long range financial planning I would tell Masaharu:

1. Marriage complicates financial planning and about half of all marriages end in divorce so be prepared. If he chooses not to avoid marriage, then an aggressive prenuptial agreement can protect his financial assets in the event of divorce.
2. Having children outside of an agricultural economy most often will diminish your wealth and therefore prudent financial planning would indicate that they should be avoided.

As for choosing between a traditional 403 (b) and a Roth option... Because he expects his tax rates to go higher in the future as he nears or enters retirement; because he is young and has decades of tax-free compounding earnings potential; or if he plans to leave his Roth to a spouse or heirs who can stretch out the tax-free growth (please have him reread points 1 & 2). Then, at this time, the Roth is a good option.

We might argue that if you can find a way to have both a Roth and a 403(b) you will be best served since you will be able to balance your portfolio by avoiding some taxes on both ends of the investment process. Financial planners call this "tax diversification." For those who have saved effectively and who have access to both a Roth and a traditional 403(b) in retirement would then have the option of pulling money from their traditional plan until they hit a tax rate plateau, but then can avoid higher taxes in that year by switching and drawing down on their Roth fund.

Also remember that reducing your taxable income has advantages for other reasons, such as avoiding taxation on Social Security benefits for people who can collect those benefits at retirement. Additionally for those who failed to consider point number 2 and who have children, those children can qualify for higher levels of financial aid if you can reduce your income through a traditional 403(b).

The question you have not asked, but we have been hearing often is: "Should I convert some or all of my money in my traditional 403 (B) to a Roth account?"

If you believe that you are very likely to end up with more savings and flexibility with a Roth plan versus the traditional 403(b), you might want to do it. Many plans do not allow you to do this, and at LSU, we are exploring how to provide this option to our employees. It will take some time but we hope to allow the opportunity to do this.

Now here, my friends, comes the complication...If you are allowed to transfer the money you will have to pay tax on any pretax contributions and earnings you convert. There has been a great deal of discussion on how to do this and avoid taxes, but almost as quickly as it arose, the IRS started to shut down the loophole. Still for those faced with mandatory distributions or interested in leaving an account within their estate to their heirs, this is a good option to consider. As we develop more information and move toward allowing the transfer, we will keep you informed.

Now some folks perhaps based on the content of my past answers have approached me and accused me of being opposed to marriage and children. I should point out that I have been married to my high school prom date for a very long time. In fact, I gave her three lovely children whom she keeps trying desperately to return to me. It should be clear that I am not opposed to marriage or children. I am only trying to point out that such factors are economically non-rational and more often than not will create obstacles to effective long-term financial planning. It should also be obvious that my wife, who lays legal claim to the majority of my financial assets, does not read this newsletter.

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END-OF-SEMESTER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE: "Newsletter Readers are reminded that the next issue of the NEWSLETTER will be the "holiday" release, which will appear around December 12<sup>th</sup> rather than November 30<sup>th</sup>. Until then, happy Thanksgiving!"

*Another Innovation from A. G. Monaco's HRM Team*

# ROTH IRA ACCOUNTS

A fine complement for or alternative to traditional retirement and 403(b) accounts

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## 2014 LSU United Way Campaign

# **INCENTIVES *for* PARTICIPANTS**

- **DONATIONS \$2,500 or more:** Opportunity to enjoy **The Ultimate Dugout Experience/Game**
  - Private tour of the locker room, team meeting room, and team lounge before the game
  - Throw out ceremonial first pitch before the game
  - Stand with the team (on field) during the National Anthem
  - Sit in the LSU dugout during a 2015 LSU Baseball game at Alex Box Stadium (2 guests)
- **DONATIONS \$1,500 or more:** Opportunity to enjoy **The Gold Seat Experience/Game**
  - Tour of facilities before the game
  - Throw out ceremonial first pitch before the game
  - Sit behind home plate during a 2015 LSU Baseball game at Alex Box Stadium (4 guests) *NOTE: Coach Mainieri's personal tickets*
- **DONATIONS \$1,000 or more:** LSU baseball memorabilia personally autographed by Coach Paul Mainieri
- **FACULTY & STAFF PARTICIPATION:** A scheduled group tour of the LSU baseball facilities for LSU departments with participation at **30% or higher**.

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### **TERMS & CONDITIONS** *(Ultimate Dugout and Gold Seat experiences)*

- Package must be used on a **non-SEC home game**.
- Per NCAA rules, **high school age students** are not allowed to participate.
- Recipients of the package must contact Nolan Cain (nolancain@lsu.edu), Director of Baseball Operations, prior to the beginning of the season to agree on a game for utilization of the package. **No specific games are guaranteed.**