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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, Holiday 2014

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Christmas, as it was called before it became a generic all-purpose "holiday," is, at least in the propaganda of western cultures, all about universality: about the day when, so it seemed, the whole world lay at rest, when benefactions went out, if not to all mankind, at least to those on Santa's good-person list. Christmas, indeed most any winter holiday, depends on the mass distribution of information: on everyone learning (a) that this is the day to keep calm and (b) what it is—what is the cultural and philosophical context—for at least a temporary peace. Everybody's favorite winter festival thus enjoys a leadership position among those personal and social factors, figures, and influences that advocate for what higher-education professionals call "General Education": that curriculum or that set of courses or that body of requirements required of everyone who enters the learning's hallowed halls.

That General Education takes at least three forms—either a curriculum or courses or requirements or some combination of these—suggests that it remains somewhat loose and general in its identity. The grandest, richest institutions, which possess the greatest means and resources to implement a mixed program of socialization, acculturation, and education, have, in recent decades, tended to prefer "core" curricula to "general" course distribution requirements. A "core" curriculum, with its strong suggestion of centrality and essentiality, suggests concentration and focus, unlike "general education" or "distribution requirements," which suggest a hit-or-miss fulfillment of quotas. Close-up examination of both sorts of curricula, however, reveal a curious inversion. Core curricula in tony institutions tend to congregate a smattering of focused courses while general education programs, more common in large state institutions, emphasize the most general, introductory and even "skills" courses. Neither model stands completely on the elusive middle ground of all-purpose instruction that adjectives such as "general" and "core" imply.

What is easy enough to recognize is that General Education in any of its current forms either lacks a clear purpose (other than its being required by most accrediting agencies) or cannot, in its current form, fulfil the purposes that we may have recognized. Contemporary American academe prizes enthusiasm and dislikes skepticism. Phrases such as "deep commitment" and "exciting new

approaches" garner more applause than doubts about the latest pedagogical fashion. Yet, privately, most honest academic professionals will admit that a large number of students seldom attend General Education courses; that the level of difficulty in these courses has dipped to so low a level as to sink to an elementary allegory of the intended subject matter; and that it is a stretch to imagine that students are learning about foreign cultures by struggling through one semester of German or are grasping the operation of the universe by taking "finite math" or are coming to an appreciation of Condorcet in Social Studies 101. However impressive the skills of the dedicated scholars who teach beginning courses, it is more than a little challenging to observe the formation of an educated citizenry in the typical General Education class.

General Education is, indeed, a good deal of what traditional universities have to offer to the *general* public. The requirement to study broadly and diversely sets legitimate universities apart from online providers and industrial certification schools. It is critical, if universities are to survive in anything resembling their present form, that colleagues begin rethinking General Education. Robust transformations are possible even within the present educational architecture. For example, an institution might choose to end the age of experimentation and create a single first-year curriculum for its students by way not only of educating but of creating an institutional identity. For another suggestion, some campuses might be re-purposed specifically for General Education. Mid-State Regional University of South Dakota, for an imaginary example, might become the designated Dakota State General Education Institute, at which students would spend their first year or two in concentrated General Education study, perhaps at a lower cost than at their intended senior colleges and perhaps in imitation of community colleges but with a four-year upgrade and overlay.

The body of material that could be assimilated into a General Education program is greater and more stimulating than ever before. Re-developing General Education could also re-energize a faculty that sorely needs good news, stimulating prospects, and appreciation from the society that it teaches.



Kevin Cope

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Patrick Martin

# Higher Education Headliner

Patrick Martin is a born and bred LSU man quite literally. His parents were graduate students at LSU, so as a newborn his parents drove him straight from the hospital to the married student apartments on Nicholson Dr. He lived in those apartments with his parents until his father finished a PhD in history. They would then move to Duke University, where his mother would earn a PhD in French and his father a law degree. Martin was destined for college, and as he joked, he thought everyone went to college until he got to high school. Martin returned to LSU to finish his own degree, a BA in political science. Then, following in his father's footsteps, he earned a law degree.

He began working for his Alma Mater and original home in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina as an attorney for the Board of Supervisors. He takes great pride in one of his accomplishments during that time, which was helping to procure 200 mobile homes for displaced medical residents in the wake of that disaster. By June 2012, he was hired as the Director of Finance and Administration, and as such, he wears many hats, working as a mediator between different departments on campus to achieve their sometimes disparate goals. For example, one day he might work on the Nicholson/Gateway expansion, and the next day he will be answering public records requests. Martin handles agreements, considers risk factors, looks at the structure of projects, and works on organizing the basic elements of projects, including practical matters such as risk management, accounting, and registration services.

One of the biggest challenges for his department, like so many, is doing more with less. With the governor's freeze and cutting of state funding coupled with the seemingly perpetual state budget shortfalls, keeping LSU running and working at its peak capacity is challenging at best. In addition, much of the LSU faculty and staff have gone without pay raises or even COLA, and their medical insurance has also become a point of contention. At the same time, they are expected to produce ever greater achievements with fewer resources. Because of the funding crisis, LSU staff must look for external sources of funding such as the LSU Foundation and the Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF).

With LSU's athletic program being one of the few athletic departments in the country that consistently turns a profit, the TAF is often tapped to give a percentage of the 7.5 million dollars that they bring in every year. The problem with this is that such sources of funding can only be used for projects, not for operating costs. This is when students, staff, and faculty start to bear the burden of cuts in terms of increased tuition, parking fees, and the like.

The athletic department, though, is a large part of LSU's success as an institution, drawing student-athletes

from across the United States. Martin and several others are implementing improvements to the student-athlete experience. They are currently in the process of creating a new residence hall, as well as "fueling stations" around campus where student-athletes can have their unique nutritional needs addressed.

Martin, also, has been part of helping the College of Engineering start a pilot program in Jakarta, Indonesia. This would allow students there to gain an LSU education without having to pay international student tuition. There are many factors to be considered, however, such as instructor housing, the cost of books, and how to treat revenue from the program. This seems like a very worthy project, but it is not without its difficulties. Although tentatively approved by the Board of Supervisors, this project is still in its infancy and should be fascinating to watch over the course of the next several years.

In addition to those projects already mentioned, Martin handles many others. He co-chaired the committee responsible for making LSU a smoke-free campus, and is, like many at LSU, concerned about parking. An outside consultant came to discuss some of the options for more convenient parking at LSU. One option would be more two-story parking structures to be used for fraternity and sorority housing, and more parking garages in general, although high construction and maintenance costs can make parking decks prohibitively expensive. As Jeffrey Campbell emphasized during his interview, Martin, also, emphasized that there is not a shortage of parking on campus per se, but a shortage of convenient parking. In terms of the new parking structure, one source of frustration for the average commuter is that many of the available spaces are paid parking rather than Commuter 1 parking. Although this is necessary due to budgetary shortfalls and the cost of building and maintaining the parking infrastructure, it is an example of how students, faculty, and guests must augment the already depleted funding from the state legislature. From the perspective of the average commuter, the cost of a parking permit should optimally allow for more convenient options around campus, including spots in parking structures.

Martin has his work cut out for him as a go-to guy for a myriad of projects on campus, having to balance a variety of concerns. LSU is part of his family and has been from his birth. He is, also, a proud father of a 17-month old daughter, who, if Martin is any indication, will one day be a proud LSU graduate and become part of this dedicated community.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman



## AAUP ACTIVITY SURGES AT SUSLA, ULL



SUSLA Faculty Leader  
Sonya Hester

The declining numbers in AAUP membership may be a thing of the past thanks to the efforts of two Louisiana faculty leaders located at opposite ends of the state. Up in Shreveport, the dynamic Sonya Hester has overcome decades of lethargy not only by reactivating her faculty senate but also by fostering a brand new AAUP Chapter. Now beginning regular meetings, Sonya's chapter joins both the statewide AAUP organization and local chapters in Baton Rouge (LSU A&M) and Lafayette (ULL). Over in Lafayette, AAUP heroes have selected a new chieftain: the indomitable George Wooddell, who has recently assumed office as the President of the Ragin' Cajun chapter. Thundering applause is due to these two engines of faculty responsibility, who have overleaped soaring hurdles to create chapters in venues seldom known for faculty empowerment.





## COMMU-





## 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.,

I have an unusual question that emerges from a blessing rather than a problem. I find myself in an unexpected situation: that of being a "higher education recession tycoon," so to speak. For years, I've labored along with an undistinguished salary as a long-term associate professor of Criminal Justice who occasionally does outside consulting. Owing to the high turnover in my institution, owing to the high cost of executive searches, and owing to my institution being severely underfunded, I've undergone a quick if not meteoric rise: department chair for six months, associate dean for another six months, and now, to my surprise, I'm the interim dean of a college with a big enrollment. As a result, my income has nearly tripled in the last year. But my experience is "meteoric" in another sense: I'm only an "interim" dean. The gravy train will stop rolling within a year or two. So, my question. What is your recommendation for the wise use of my short-term salary windfall? Should I pump up my 403b contribution or should I max out an IRA or Roth account opportunity? Or would it be better to pay down my mortgage? Or pay up a life insurance policy? Or set aside money for old-age medical needs? Or maybe invest on my own? Or do some smart handicapping on the sixth race at Delta Downs? Let me give you some numbers. Before all this started, I was making circa \$55K per year at my regional university while also drawing \$5K annually from contracts and consultations. I'm now, saints be praised, earning \$155K per year. I'm forty-eight years old and am married to a teacher, who earns \$35K annually. I have approximately \$175K in my state Optional Retirement Plan ("ORP") in basic index funds; my wife is on the TRSL defined-benefits plan. We have two children in college but they generate little cost because both will graduate within two years and are, in any case, largely subsidized by TOPS.

Thank you, A G! You are a godsend to those of us who are financial tyros!

Your admirer,

GUNTHER (Ruston)



### The Response

Gunter,

I have been criticized from time to time because I emphasize that each of us must first "feed ourselves" before taking care of others. While that is true, I defend the suggestion by explaining that we live in a world that forces us to make choices. My favorite economist would say, "Economics is not a value in and of itself but rather it is only a structure to weigh one value against another." I believe that the most important choice you can make right now is whether to seize the extra money you are about to receive and position it to provide you with long term financial security or spend it on items that are likely to hold no value when you retire in 20 years.

So, Gunter, I advise you to consider the following –what has more value: a) Having Santa leave the missus a little blue box from Tiffany's under the tree this year, but forcing her to work until she is 80; b) Having the pit boss in Marksville know you by name but having to cut lawns in the summer to make ends meet; c) Buying your kid a new car but asking him to support you in your 70's; d) Creating the opportunity for future financial security by treating that extra money you are collecting as a "windfall" and carefully placing it somewhere that will allow your wealth to grow or your debts to diminish.

As to whether or not you should pay off all or a part of your mortgage depends on the interest rate you are paying on your mortgage? The annual return on the S&P 500 (and its predecessor-

S&P 90 index) from 1926-2013 has been 10.08%. I would guess that if your mortgage was created after 1995 your interest rate is likely to be lower than 10.08%. When you factor in that the interest you pay on your mortgage reduces the amount of income taxes you pay, there is a good chance that a long-term investment in a 403b type account will bring you a better return than paying off your mortgage.

Rather than your mortgage take a look at car payments or credit card balances, since they often can present much higher interest rates than your mortgage but that interest paid is not deductible on your tax return. If you have a Visa card with a three thousand dollar balance look carefully at that interest rate. It might be worth paying that amount off rather than placing the money in an IRA or even your 403b. Being released from paying a high monthly charge should allow you to save more in the future. Of course you would also need to avoid the temptation of paying off your debt and starting new debt the next day through imprudent use of your card.

One idea for reducing impulse buying with a credit card is to place your credit cards in a cup of water and leave them in the freezer. If you need to rely on them in an emergency when the transmission on the minivan dies you will still have access, but they will not be readily available to make that late night purchase of an inflatable kayak on QVC.

Continued on page 5

I just don't see enough return on a life insurance policy unless of course you die shortly after buying one. Of course even then you do not actually get the reward, someone else does. While those you leave behind will reap a reward after your death, the amount of money invested could have served you better in other investment venues during your lifetime. If you live a long time, your returns on a universal life insurance policy will be "anemic." I personally rely on inexpensive term life insurance.

Almost as bad as betting on the ponies is not sheltering some of this windfall money from taxes. If you are not at your maximum contribution for the 403b you might consider "pumping up" your contribution. The fact that you could be in a lower tax bracket in the future means sheltering the money now in a tax sheltered investment is a good idea. When your salary is reduced you can reduce your 403b contribution.

If you have some of your windfall left over after you have maxed out your 403b contributions you might also consider some derivative of an IRA for either you or your spouse. Inviting your spouse to participate in retirement or investment planning is an intelligent safeguard if something unforeseen should happen to you. Additionally sharing financial knowledge can create more opportunities for intelligent discussion and yes... romance. I personally have found in-depth discussions about mutual funds to be quite titillating.

What you should invest in is based on factors like your age, your willingness to handle risk, your willingness to devote time to your investments, your income, and how long you think you will continue to work.

For many years investors were asked to use the rule of 100 to determine what percentage of your investment activities should be in stocks and what percentage should be in bonds. Now they

use the rule of 120. Subtracting your age of 48 from 120 means that approximately 72% of your investment portfolio should be in equities and 28% in bonds or investments that guarantee a return. In your case if you combine your investments with your spouses you might look at placing even more in equities since your wife's enrollment in the traditional TRSL pension means that she will be guaranteed a percentage of her average income upon retirement. Think of that pension as an investment in a bond fund or an annuity and that means you may wish to place even more of your investments in equities.

That said investments are not a "sure thing" and with everything comes some risk. Returns on equity investments are never guaranteed but the length of the investment and diversification of your investments do reduce risk. Look closely at your investment options and make sure that you invest in funds that are broad in their holdings and provide for realistic returns at reasonable fees. While many have made large sums of money investing in individual stocks there is greater risk in doing so and many have lost their investments. Generally experts advise that pension investments be broadly diversified through a combination of various mutual funds with holdings in equities and bonds in a variety of market sectors. That seems to me to be good advice.

Remember I am an HR "hack" working at a state university who lurches down Interstate 12 every morning to get to work. By no means am I as knowledgeable as some investment guru who is vacationing on a yacht docked off St Barts. Read what those experts have to say. What I have suggested are some obvious facts and you can research further or get a real expert to help you.

I look forward to seeing you at the Ruston Peach Festival in June. I hear Chubby Carrier and the Bayou Swamp Band are performing on the 28<sup>th</sup>. There ain't no party like a Zydeco party!

## COMING IN APRIL



**Open to all faculty statewide**

**Financial Wellness Seminar version 2.0**



**An updating of the popular, standing-room-only financial seminar of 2012, focusing on retirement portfolio development and management and on the needs of professionals**



**To be co-sponsored by Campus Federal Credit Union and by the LSU Faculty Senate**

**Keep an  out for more information!**





## AAUP ANNOUNCES ESSAY COMPETITION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is enhancing the celebration of its centennial anniversary by sponsoring both an essay and an art competition for both undergraduates and graduate students. The prize for the winning essay in each of the aforementioned divisions and genres is a cool \$1,000.00, for a total of four prizes summing to \$4,000.00. The theme for both essays and artwork: “Academic Freedom: Its Concept, Its History, Its Successes, Its Failures.” The deadline for submissions, January 15, is fast approaching, so do gather the details [online](#).



## DRAFT PARKING REPORT CONFIRMS FACULTY SENATE INPUT



Jeffrey Campbell,  
Senior Director of Administrative  
Services, Risk Management, and  
Parking

Those who have, over the years, expressed chagrin with LSU’s arcane parking and parking-pricing practices have been vindicated by the draft of the report from Walker Parking Consultants, the expert firm hired by LSU A&M to provide guidance in the long-overdue revision of campus parking arrangements. Although not yet officially released, it appears that the report will confirm that no computer upgrade is needed to op-

erate a cloud-based parking system (for years, LSU officialdom had alleged that delays resulted from the electronic equivalent of waiting for Godot, i.e., waiting for the new mainframe); that the design of current parking access wands is faulty; that at least some parking personnel require training to metamorphose from grouches to “ambassadors;” that the pay stations in the new campus parking structure should, as the report dryly opines, be allowed (quickly) to wear out; and that parking pricing is irrational and unfairly distributed. Congratulations go to Parking magnate Jeff Campbell for getting the job done and for exposing the truth about those narrow spaces between white lines.

## HOOPS REPLACE METRICS IN LSU \$4M SPLURGE



One of the general principles of academic life is that salary emoluments *follow* accomplishments. Not so with the LSU Athletic Department, which, looking far into the future, has once again lavishly rewarded *that which is to come* for fear that *that which is unknown* might be worse. Always terrified of a turnover, LSU Athletics has handed early-career basketball coach Johnny Jones a \$400,000.00 increase in annual guaranteed supplemental compensation as well as a two-year contract extension all the way into 2019. Five years of a \$400K supplement plus two years of the extant \$1.1M contract all puts LSU and its supporters on the line for \$4.2M. Per usual practice, the costs are dismissed as the burden of private sponsors and donors; but, then, is it not the case that donors draw their money from prices charged to consumers, i.e., that, in this no-new-tax state, those industrialists have imposed a de facto basketball



## WHAT TO DO?

Leaders at LSU seem to have split into two camps regarding textbooks purchases. One the one hand, the avant-garde librarians have launched a campaign calling for wider use of free (or at least inexpensive) online open-source materials; on the other hand, the campus bookstore has been charged with reviving the book. Professors and instructors, meanwhile, hover between the lure of textbook royalties and the feelings of currency that come with commitment to the e-universe. Who among the tribes of intellectual Israel will split these offspring of innovation?



Textbook savings—or losses?

## SELU FS PRES KIRYLO CLOBBERS JINDAL



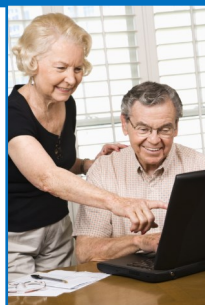
SELU's James Kirylo

In one of the more extravagant examples of inappropriate titling, Governor Bobby Jindal, who seldom wants to meet anyone other than a donor, elected to appear on the NBC Television news journal *Meet the Press*. As could be expected,

Jindal presented his usual account of the purported economic miracle of Louisiana, albeit in the face of briskly skeptical questioning by network reporters. Nonplused by Jindal's profiling, courageous Southeastern Louisiana University Faculty Senate President James Kirylo drew on his own network of media connections, releasing a riposte to Jindal first through Hammond media outlet "Action News" and then through a variety of social media outlets, including those of Dayne Sherman. Kirylo, who has previously garnered honors as SELU Teacher of the Year, delivered, in his column, a barrage of facts that leveled the Governor's exaggerations and that disclosed the truth to Louisianians committed to the improvement of education. Catch Kirlo's now-gone-viral column [online](#).

## GENDER SNAFU SANDPAPERS LS-SMOOTH

Those acquainted with the LSU System know that its prime imperative is smoothness. Events at the Lakeshore building or in any of its satellites are carefully programmed to ensure that even the appearance of irregularity remains outside of the frame. Historians of fashion could have a field day studying the costumes in this cloister-like building, attire which is carefully selected so as to be noticeable specifically for being unnoticeable. Rumors have spread that the "facial," that once-fashionable treatment to ensure a smoothly delicate visage, may be regaining popularity among the LSU mandarin caste. Those employed in Neutrogena-izing the LSU System suffered a non-emollient moment when new LSU System PR chief Linda Bonnin was tagged in a lawsuit by an aggrieved former employee who alleged dismissal owing to age (old) and gender (male). University of Memphis newspaper [The Daily Helmsman](#) reported a bizarre scene during which Bonnin beamed into a Memphis hearing room, there to be projected on "a white screen that dominated the wall" while "her voice boomed from three speakers." Central to the plaintiff's grievance is the claim that PR people regard the elderly as incapable of social networking or otherwise spending their days in useful activities such as tweeting. The *Newsletter* lacks the resources to probe this case but suggests that this might be an occasion to discuss the array of prejudices that animate the public relations materials of all campuses. Is there a recruitment or alumni magazine in the world that shows an old and ugly person studying entomology, or are such publications suffused with a kind of post-Hollywood youth-mania?



## MYSTERY MEAT OR MYSTERY MEAT CASE?

Those who have visited the Guthrie Scottish Rite Museum in windy Oklahoma know the story of textile ambition: the purchase, by the temple deans, of a Persian carpet so big and so robust that it could not enter the building (ultimately, the Masons used their nominal building skill to remove the roof and deliver or rather lower the rug using cranes). One need not resort to joining a secret order to experience such a mismatch. *Newsletter* "plants" deep within the Louisiana meat world report that the Ag Center experienced a bit of a sizing gaff when a super-sized simulated meat case intended for instructional use could not make the turn into the ever-troubled new Ag building down by Tureaud Hall. In a scene worthy of the Brothers Grimm, an assembly of elfin Ag experts deployed hammers and wrenches to create a cardboard mockup—a simulation of a simulation—as part of an attempt to find ways to make the turn and surmount the steps while carrying the pricey behemoth. Alas, no return was possible because no delivery requirements had been included in the purchase contract. Efforts by the beneficiaries of the purchase to manage the specifications for the copycat chiller had been rebuffed. The monkey-shines only seemed to end when burly fellows in an unmarked vehicle whisked the mint-condition meat case off to an undisclosed location. Attempts to discover the whereabouts of the meat case have uncovered only expressions of amused or friendly plausible deniability of the "well, I don't know where it went" variety. Could the mystery meat case now have found its way to Area 51 or perhaps Roswell?



## LOMBARDO LIFTS THE LUMBER, MOVES MASTER PLANNERS

Followers of the Federation of Planets know that "the next generation" lasted longer and did a lot more than did those aboard the original U.S.S. Enterprise. So it is that, even in the nuts-and-bolts world of Facility Services, we can expect "the next generation" to outdistance its pioneering predecessors, if only owing to the fact that the first few stages have already fired and the velocity is already established. Nothing could be more amazing than the Renaissance of repair that is underway in the administration of LSU A&M Facility Services headman Tony Lombardo, who, along with a band of merry men and women worthy of any Sherwood Forest, is spearheading an LSU Master Planning effort that is already light-years ahead of any arrow shot by previous archers. In its recent, late November meeting, the Master Planning Working Group heard updates of a multi-pronged effort that involves rethinking dining space; study space; infrastructure; housing; sustainability; and, of course, parking, to name but a few of the areas in a plan that, in a word, covers everything. Lombardo et al. are well ahead of schedule and are thinking hard; we expect great results!





## KAPTAIN, LICATA WOW A2RU CROWD

A development that has slipped under the radar screen in work-force-obsessed Louisiana is the rise of “[A2RU](#)”, the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities, of which



Larry Kaptain and Vincent LiCata address A2RU

LASU A&M is a member. Laden with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, A2RU has moved from working behind the scenes to exhorting in front of the camera so as to advance the arts in universities that have come under pressure from productivity-minded legislatures and economically-intoxicated donors. November marked the emergence of A2RU as a national player with the mounting of its first national convention in Ames, Iowa on the wealthy if chilly campus of Iowa State University. Dozens upon dozens of ingenious colleagues from around the nation unveiled programs seeking to end the divisions between the arts and the sciences. Topics ranged from the curricular—how to integrate the arts into a curriculum serving career-minded students—to the speculative, whether the artistic dimensions of the representation of the ecosphere or the future financing of arts initiatives. A few lucky attendees profited from the experience of the Iowa State tornado and micro-burst simulator, which blew more than a few tops among the cap-and-gown crowd. Chief among the presenters were no less than former LSU A&M Creative Initiatives Steward Larry Kaptain (now offering his talents to the University of Colorado) and LSU A&M Faculty Senator Vincent LiCata, who delighted the crowd with a presentation on how to move creativity from the edge to the center of a major research institution. Although A2RU is presently for large research institutions, other Louisiana research-intensive campuses should make ready to join!

## UAL PAYDOWN SLIPS BUT PROFESSORS STILL PAY

*Newsletter* readers know well the process by which medical insurance premiums at the Office of Group Benefits were artificially reduced so as to allow the state to use money that would have kept the “OGB” plans solvent to



cover other costs (with the result that OGB is now teetering on bankruptcy and benefits have been reduced). Now, it seems, the same trick is underway among the retirement programs, including those administered by the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana (“TRSL”) and the Louisiana State Employees Retirement System (“LASERS”). Rather than use the 2014 stock market run-up to pay down the UAL, the Public Retirement Systems Actuarial Committee, an appointed, non-elected body, has approved a reduction in retirement payments by state agencies. The affected state agencies, including state universities, have quietly embraced this arrangement owing to its potential to reduce costs. Unfortunately, the de facto diverting of investment earnings (by using those to maintain the retirement plan while using state appropriations for other purposes) not only slows the elimination of the UAL but leaves intact the system by which higher education professionals pay disproportionate sums toward the elimination of a liability that they never created. Those in the Optional Retirement Plan (“ORP”) also continue to pay into the UAL at the usual rate while the K–12 plan participants reap the benefits through the stabilization of their plan.

## SEC AND THE BUSINESS OF ACADEMICS

Since the signing of its first billion-dollar media contract and even more intensively since creating its own multi-billion dollar television network, the Southeastern Conference has been pouring on the grit in an effort to polish its image as an academic entity. After all but abandoning its first effort at cultivating leadership opportunities for faculty interested in administration, the SEC moved on to a competition intended to reward the putatively “best” professors in the SEC schools, choosing fourteen finalists out of the tens of thousands who labor in SEC institutions and then calling it a day after having proclaimed one professor the equivalent of a world champion. The SEC has apparently now moved on to even grander projects, the next of which is billed as the “[Southeastern Conference Symposium](#).” Scheduled for late September 2015, this high-ticket extravaganza, which comes complete with the kind of highly staged, brilliantly lit presentations that enhance TED talks, is predictably dedicated to the theme of “Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship: Driving a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Economy.” Even if we overlook that football metaphor—“driving”—we can only wonder what the SEC imagines will be the appeal of an event that continues to hammer at the all too familiar theory that universities should serve business first and then think about scholarship. We must wonder how many papers on art history or on musicology will grace this session, the summit of which seems to be a “Provost’s Reception.”



## CRONY SCANDAL RIPS GRAMBLING ADMINISTRATION



Grambling Faculty Activist Matthew Ware

The cookie not only crumbled but outright exploded this month as Grambling faculty launched a series of initiatives and investigations intended to liberate that beleaguered HBCU from its imposed interim administration. The eruption began as faculty expressed concern over an apparent contradiction: the juxtaposition of a claim, by the administration of interim President Cynthia Warrick, that Grambling teetered on financial exigency owing to a \$3,700,000.00 budget deficit against a hiring spree that has now encumbered Grambling with eight new administrators

working at high salaries never previously seen on the intellectually renowned economically challenged north Louisiana campus.

The biggest volley in the battle was lobbed on November 13, when the Grambling State University Faculty passed a no-confidence vote in President Cynthia Warrick, noting that Warrick had recruited an array of deputies at salaries well over \$100,000.00; had provided them with free housing and meals; had bungled management of the revenue-producing admissions office; and had begun development of a new mission statement without consultation with the faculty. With an ear that could be described as tin were it not that tin nowadays is a valuable metal, Warrick retorted that she had been “transparent” about what she was doing. Some faculty quickly synonymized “transparent” with “shameless” and “brazen.”

As the faculty putsch attempt unfolded, an anonymous faculty activist unveiled a blazing broadside. This chart correlated Warrick and eight of her minions with their current salaries; their past experiences; their previous jobs; their background; and documentation of their misadventures. Although far too extensive for quotation in the *Newsletter*, the chart includes such choice tidbits as the previous disbaring of Warrick’s top-salaried Associate Vice-President for Advancement and Economic Development; the appointment of an admissions director with no previous experience; the selection of a workforce development director who had been fired from a previous position for laying off twenty-nine workers to fund his and his immediate staff’s raises; the employing of a special assistant who claims experience as a CPA but whose registration as an accountant cannot be located; and the assignment of a \$60,000.00 salary, far beyond that of entry-level assistant professors, to a secretary with only a high school degree. Warrick herself is “outed” as a favorite of South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, a well-known Jindal supporter.

As Christmas approaches, the battle continued. Central Louisiana faculty operatives arranged for the press to cover the [presentation](#) by Grambling scientist-educator Matthew Ware, who unleashed a demand for the quick removal of interim President Warrick before additional damage is done. Ware told a statewide assembly of faculty leaders that Grambling traditionally welcomes new Presidents and that no one had ever seen the campus so united in its desire to remove the imposed President. Reports indicate that University of Louisiana System President Sandra Woodley may pay an avuncular visit to Grambling to discuss the situation with faculty. How that will fix the damage done by Warrick’s million-and-one-half payroll bulge remains to be seen.

The latest voltage spike in this energetic crisis occurred at the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors meeting on December 12, when an ensemble of Grambling students accompanied by Grambling alumni appeared at a meeting usually visited only by the [Ghosts of Governance Past](#). One view of the angry student-alumni siege force was enough to prompt Board Chair Gerald “T-Boy” Hebert to make the “T” (timeout) sign and call for a post-meeting faux-executive session so as to parlay with the protestors (faux, in that, by Louisiana law, an executive session may only include Board members, not invitees). The aggrieved students and alumni seemed relieved to have gotten a hearing, but Grambling faculty speaking off-the-record express skepticism.

## F&A FRINGE BAILING OUT TRSL

The economic ingenuity even of cloistered researchers never fails to astound *Newsletter* staffers. The Chair of the Benefits Committee at LSU A&M has lately investigated the uses of “F&A” (facilities and administration) or



“fringe” surcharges on federal and industrial research contracts. Currently, the LSU A&M, Pennington, and Law Center fringe charges come in at 40%; most other research-producing campuses in the state assess similar levies on funded research. An inquiry to top officials uncovered the nearly half of those monies are going not, as some had hoped, to support the campus and its research activities, but directly to the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana, which, as is now well known, is saddled by an enormous unfunded accrued liability owing to chronic state under-funding of K–12 retirement accounts. It turns out that 7.25% of the fringe charges go to TRSL (presumably to its defined-benefit plan) while a huge 12.22% go to the Optional Retirement Plan “ORP”). Considering that only 5.18% of regular salary finds its way into employee ORP accounts and considering that grant support often goes well beyond salary, one can only conclude that federal and private funds are being diverted for other state purposes such as paying off the aforementioned UAL, for which faculty never had any responsibility.

## AAUP ENDORSEMENTS FOR CENTENNIAL DECLARATION

Followers of academic culture have the overall change in tone at the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which seems to be taking a more assertive approach to dealing with institutions around the land. Since the arrival of the new leadership a year or so ago and since the reorganization of the AAUP into an array of units addressing specific issues, whether collective bargaining or control of the curriculum, the AAUP has attempted to restyle itself as an organization with teeth to back up its words of persuasion. Its latest move has been the formulation of a “Centennial Declaration” that reaffirms an array of academic values, including academic freedom, the value of shared governance, and the primacy of the public good over the generating of private profits. The AAUP is asking colleges



is col-na-



# Lifestyle Feature



## GIVING SANTA (AND MRS. CLAUS) THE BOOT: TWO-GENDER FOOTWEAR FIRMS

Once upon a time, a great gulf separated men's and women's shoes. Whether on the North Pole—think of Santa Claus with his hefty patent leather boots standing along Mrs. Claus with her boiled wool house shoes—or on the Rue Rivoli, where Parisian ladies seldom took a gander at Wellingtons and where the boardroom loafer once ran from the cake club pump, shoes of earlier eras maintained gender separation. Nowadays, however and perhaps fortunately, worldwide footwear companies and even a few top-level designers have recognized the market value as well as the fashion opportunities afforded by a market in which customers evaluate shoes by function rather than affiliation. Today, no one asks whether an exercise shoe is primarily for men or women but rather whether it will endure the hot steps on the Zumba floor. As a result, shoes may be making a comeback as a Christmas gift. Back in the bad old days, placing a pair of boots under the Christmas tree could have triggered the reception of any of a variety of messages, some of them offbeat or even off-color; today, enthusiasts of every stripe relish the receipt of footwear enabling their chosen lifestyles.

It is therefore not altogether surprising that the greatest number of two-gender shoemakers sell lifestyle as often as they sell leather. Shoe catalogues from the plurality if not the majority of firms invoke a range of experiences, feelings, moods, venues, and adventures in which, presumably, their shoes play a material role. Knowing that those who care little for gender fancy themselves to be open-minded and relish the thought that they might engage in great explorations, more than a few shoe purveyors rely on the great outdoors as the vehicle for the peddling of shoes that will never walk into any territory more threatening than Albertsons or Walgreens. It is among this range of merchants that the greatest danger lies, for profile-conscious consumers may be tempted to buy seemingly outdoorsy footwear that is, in fact, uncomfortable in any situation.

At the top of the warning list are shoes from Timberland, which, despite its earthy and organize look, belongs to clothing megafirm VF Corporate and operates chain stores on several continents. [Timberland](#) with its imagistic name, puts a heavy emphasis on boots, boat shoes, and sandals, but, especially in recent years, has stressed the value of these items as fashion icons—as emblems of rather than means of accessing the wildwood. Indeed, [Timberland](#) now allows customers to customize shoes with fashion motifs by way of relieving their heavy, woodsy appearance. Experts in the footwear testing division of the *Newsletter* have, however, repeatedly tried Timberland offerings only to find that their remarkably stiff leather, the result of a proprietary tanning process, makes their use in demanding environments painful if not impossible. Timberland also cuts shoes on the narrow side, which is less than a wise move given the tendency of the foot to



spread during a walking day.

A slightly less modern but probably more reliable entry in the simulated outdoor fashion genre are the shoes of [Dexter](#), originally an up east, Maine-based firm but now a national concern that operates outlets around the nation. Dexter has had its ups and downs over the years. Tempted to escape its nut-cracker-y New England origins, it dropped its quality and sank to the Shoe Station sort of mass market. Now, however, it seems to be attempting to reclaim its brand and legacy, all to good effect. Although no longer truly upper-end, Dexter shoes remains serviceable, comfortable, and consistent with their modest goals—and free of the absurd distortions of their Timberland competitors. Possibly a better choice would be the wide array of pseudo-rough shoes vended by [The Walking Company](#), a firm with outlets in high quality malls as well as a robust online site. The Walking Company likes to promote the sub-equatorial regions. It is big on Australia, Peru, and even Tierra del Fuego; it has partnered with semi-Australian UGG and uses more than a few photographs of sky lodge windows looking out on what appear to be Andean vistas.

At one time, The Walking Company offered a dazzling variety of shoes but has lately tended to focus on previously no- or semi-name maker Abeo, about whose products the jury continues to sit rather than walk. Still, The Walking Company remains one of the few aggregators that present a full range of shoes (albeit never the full line of any one brand).

Less successful in making the transition to national marketing has been the perdurable [L. L. Bean](#), which scored big, in the middle of the twentieth century, with its Maine wading boots and its American-made sturdy shoes. Owing to the big demand for the reverse, rural cachet that it confers, L. L. Bean has outsourced its manufacturing to a variety of third-world venues with dubious labor and safety practices. A recently-tested pair of slippers, for example, reeked so heavily of what smelled somewhat like synthetic cinnamon that they went sailing out the window along with the stale Christmas cookies. A much better choice for that Atlantic coast feel is old-favorite [Sperry](#), whose much imitated but in fact inimitable “Topsider” boat shoes excel in comfort, grip, economy, and, of course, suitability for both genders. Remarkably, Sperry Topsides look good with a blazer and a pair of business or even business-casual pants. They evidence a certain understated panache that evokes the great days of America. Or, if the boat look sinks in your eyes, consider the offerings from newcomer [Pikolinos](#), which has successfully overlaid a kind of Greek fisherman look atop a wide range of fashion shoes and sandals for both men and women and which specializes in a remarkably soft yet dressy leather than merges comfort with modish savvy. Pikolinos has lately found it prudent to collaborate with outdoor lifestyle marketer Orvis, thus achieving the coveted association with the (memory of the) American outdoors.



Continued on page 11



The Orivs-Pikolinos partnership segues into another class of double-gender shoes: those marketed by old-line haberdasheries that are currently seeking new, young customers. At the top of this list is [Brooks Brothers](#), which selectively markets a very small number of shoes that seem designed to deliver a specific effect. If one wants to look as if ready for a Pimm's party, Brooks Brothers is the best place, in north America, to seek the required footwear. Brooks Brothers has no line of its own, but it offers quality products, albeit at substantial markups. Ditto for [Cole Haan](#), which, after acquisition by Nike, somehow lost its way but is now seeking to recover its market and to offer some creative options for specialized situations. The revival of Cole Haan as a "name" manufacturer may be delayed by this turn into the urban if not the outdoor world, but more than a few mode opportunities are emerging as this struggling firm comes around the curve.

Although it may be a little melancholy to admit it, the best all-around shoe opportunities continue to come not from America but rather from Europe, especially from Italy, Germany, and Scandinavia. Among the top performers from "old Europe" would surely be the lovely shoes of [Josef Seibel](#). Billed as the "European comfort shoe," Seibel shoes, especially those in the "dress" genre, enwrap the foot in a wonderfully soft and comfortable leather with no compromise with respect to shine, appearance, or general dressiness. Seibel delivers dazzling design and orthopedic achievement while polishing up that special design pizzazz that we associate with continental commercial art. Close on the heels of Josef Seibel is Italian comfort shoe genius [Geox](#), which specializes in a breathable and yet water-resistant leather



and a special perforated sole lining that allows for the circulation of air—a "must" in a climate such as Louisiana's. Beware, however, of once-great Børn, which has cashed in on its Scandinavian heritage, moved its production offshore, lowered its prices, and, in general, junkified itself.

At the very top of the list among European all-around shoe empires are those presided over by Danish Ecco and German Mephisto. [Ecco](#) has carved out a niche in the \$250 dollar combined dress and service shoe market. It sleek, attractive, and yet sturdy shoes allow for the wearing of the finest suits at the same time that they allow one to walk comfortably down a mile of cobblestones.

Better, it has ventured into the casual and recreational shoe universe without losing its orientation and without surrendering its chic. Even more impressive is the thundering entrance of Mephisto into the fashion and all-around shoe scene. [Mephisto](#), which began as one of those go-to venues for German *Gymnasium* instructors for whom the meaning of life abided in orthopedic correctness, has assembled a design team that has allowed it to release astoundingly comfortable and supportive shoes in every category while preserving that hearty German design heritage. While not quite as peppy as Ecco and Seibel, Mephisto shoes are the hands-down winners in nearly every category, albeit perhaps not in every specific way. Mephisto has now chartered a store in [Palm Beach](#), Florida, that carries most of its designs and that even offers free overnight shipping. Mephisto shoes may not be kind on your budget, but they are, in the long run, the best buy, especially when walking through the winter wonderland!

Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah to all!

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## BARNES AND NOBLE ENLIGHTENS FAC-

Barnes and Noble, which operates, under outsourcing contracts, the plurality of campus bookstores in this state, has begun responding to faculty, in large measure owing to the efforts of the LSU Bookstore Committee as well as owing to the intercession of productively persistent Margot Carroll, head of Auxiliary Services on the Red Stick research campus. Acknowledging that few faculty receive notices regarding ordering of textbooks, Barnes and Noble has begun circulating more information about its “FacultyEnlight” [website](#), which provides faculty with an assortment of utilities related to the procuring of books and other classroom and media materials. FacultyEnlight, per a name that resonate of neoclassicism, has undergone a remake in the direction of simplicity and clarity. In its original version, this tool had bewildered faculty by dragging them through a labyrinthine array of social media experiences. This new edition carefully segregates simple book searching and ordering from the more extended applications, all to good effect.



Barnes and Noble FacultyEnlight eases book ordering burdens

## NEW FOOD TRUCK ROARS INTO TIGER CAMPUS



Cajun Corner Food Truck

*Newsletter*  
readers have been following, for months, the efforts expended to break down the single-source, monopoly contracts that have

led to shoddy food service and other excrescences on Louisiana campuses. Now, thanks to the cooperation of Auxiliary Services genius Margot Carroll, a second food truck has appeared on the LSU A&M campus, this one under the denomination “Cajun Corner.” Cajun Corner, with its truck that looks somewhat like a cypress fence of building (maybe a duck blind), serves up an assortment of lip-smacking regional dishes, whether boudin balls or jambalaya. It packs a lot of nutrition into takeaway boxes that offer most of the four food groups and that leave the chain restaurants on campus reaching for the hot sauce or maybe for a lifesaver! Highly recommended, the Cajun Corner food truck is a “must” for any gastronome who enjoys the work of mobile chefs. Thank you, Margot!

## BENEFITS FORUM FILLS HOUSE, STREAMS



Statewide Benefits Forum, November 18

Statewide audiences enjoyed a lively if also sobering treat as LSUnited, the LSU faculty advocacy group, and the LSU Faculty Senate co-sponsored a live-streamed benefits forum that both filled the hall and also drew viewers from around the state. Included in the panel were Representative John Bel Edwards; renowned blogger and political commentator Dayne Sherman; Southeastern Louisiana University Faculty Senate President James Kirylo; LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin L. Cope; and LSUnited representative Stuart Irvine. During the ninety-minute event, panelists offered summary statements relating to the crisis at the Office of Group Benefits and the continuing troubles of the retirement plan. Representative Edwards also laid out his vision for the future of education in Louisiana and provided in-depth interpretations of pending legislation as well as of the economy that underlies the educational project. Panelists analyzed an veritable kaleidoscope of questions and comments from often boisterous audience members. All in attendance applauded LSUnited for the development of an innovative forum that productively tackled hard issues. The full forum may be viewed online by going to

the dedicated “retirement and benefits” page on the LSU Faculty Senate [website](#) and then scrolling down to the bottom, where the forum is the penultimate link in the list (click it and allow the large video time to load).



A photograph of the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine building, a large, modern structure with a series of tall, narrow, vertical concrete columns. The sky is blue with some clouds.

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# GUEST COLUMN

## We All Do Live in a Submarine (of any Color): A Chemist Probes the Coast



Airboat ride on Jefferson Lake Canal (West Pointe a la Hache in Plaquemines Parish)—with Plaquemines Parish Sheriff's Deputy Chad LaFrance and Plaquemines Parish Coastal Zone Project Manager,

When I was assigned to teach a Physical Science course for non-science majors at LSU Shreveport two years ago, I was unsure of what to expect. I had heard stories from colleagues about frightened liberal arts majors who are sometimes hesitant to apply themselves in science courses. Not surprisingly, I found that my own students showed little interest in learning about the shape of ammonia molecules or the dipole moment of water, but I also found that these same students really wanted to learn how science could explain the world around them, including problems that impact their own future.

I also found that I needed to educate myself about some of our state's most pressing issues. Living in north Louisiana, I admit

that I had rarely thought about our vanishing coastline, but when a friend recommended the book, "Bayou Farwell" by Mike Tidwell, I dove right in. Suddenly, it became very clear that we all face a very precarious future, due to the fastest land loss of any place on Earth. Indeed, this problem is not only relevant to all Louisianans but to all Americans as well.

I became eager to witness the situation first hand, and during a semester break, I embarked on a 7-day odyssey, exploring both the reality of our vanishing coastal region as well as some cutting edge solutions to address the problems. As I witnessed families who would soon be forced to leave cherished homes, local businesses having trouble obtaining insurance, and investments declining in value due to the uncertain coastal future, I became engrossed in my experiences.

I attended the retirement party of Kerry St. Pe, BTNEP's legendary Director and coastal zone advocate at Nicholls State University. I also met Gen. Russel Honore at a Green Army Rally in Baton Rouge, advocating for the sanctity of our fresh water, and I ate the most delicious red snapper at the Venice Marina. Fortunately, I was able to charge my electric car at RV hookups in family operated motels and campgrounds, all the while being welcomed with friendly smiles and kindness as I sought to learn more. I was also graciously welcomed at LUMCON, truly one of Louisiana's crown jewels, where Murt Conover gave me a tour of their research facilities.

Traveling along LA Hwy 1, south of Golden Meadow was when I first realized that my surroundings were actually quite different from what the map showed. The road stretched over increasingly narrow slivers of land, flanked on both sides by dying wetlands. The town of Leeville in Lafourche Parish was most shocking, with cemeteries and even an electrical substation submerged in the brackish water. I spoke to shrimpers and their families along Bayou Lafourche and learned how several square miles of citrus orchards were gradually replaced with open water, in just over two generations.

The vanishing land is so devastating to these communities that people discuss it with weary and forlorn expressions on their faces. Sadly, Leeville was the last town before the hulking new Gateway to the Gulf bridge whisked me all the way to Port Fourchon and Grand Isle, over miles and miles of dying and submerged wetlands.

But how have these problems crept up on us, to the point that they seem almost insurmountable now? In fact, Louisiana has lost over 2,000 sq. miles of coastline since 1930, and we may lose another 1,000 sq. miles by 2050; nearly 2 acres (2.6 football fields) of land are being lost to the Gulf of

Mexico every hour.

A combination of factors are involved. First, south Louisiana sits atop a number of natural geological faults, and the southern quarter of the state is slowly sliding down the continental shelf. The land of the Mississippi Delta itself is largely made of soft organic matter, which gradually settles over time. We have also extracted a lot of oil and water from the ground, resulting in a reduction of pore pressures in oil formations and aquifers, further contributing to the subsidence of the land. Louisiana also has *ca.* 20,000 miles of oil and gas pipelines along our coast; much of it was laid in narrow ditches dug through the wetlands. However, those narrow ditches widened into full-fledged canals, allowing saltwater to penetrate far into the wetlands. Furthermore, as the oceans warmed and the glaciers melted, the sea level has risen about 25 cm since 1930, and this will become the single biggest contributor to the problem if we

do not get anthropogenic climate change under control.

The oceans may rise at a rate of 1 cm per year by 2050. Finally, the Army Corps' extensive levees no longer allow the Mississippi River over its banks to naturally replenish the eroding wetlands with new sediment each spring.

Yet, despite the gloomy outlook, our state has a very competent *Coastal Restoration Plan* in place, and the funds from the BP settlement are finally being put to work to restore the coastline. In Plaquemines Parish, for example, I was treated to an assortment of successful wetlands and fringe marsh restoration projects. Through a combination of fresh water sediment diversion and sand dredging from the Mississippi River, about twelve thousand acres of eroded wetlands have already been restored,

and a new long distance sediment pipeline will help restore wetlands as far away as Barataria Bay and Lafourche Parish. It was especially inspirational to witness restoration projects during a 2-hour airboat ride from West Pointe a la Hache all the way to Lake Hermitage, and later in Buras and Happy Jack, during a truck ride down to Venice.

At a cost of \$36,000 per acre, these projects do not come cheap, and, restoring all 2,000 square miles of lost land would cost over \$50 billion. Clearly, Louisianans will not have it easy, but have we ever? Solving the problems will force us to be strategic and to muster all the gumption and wisdom that we can deliver, but it is not a losing battle if we combine new innovations with funding from the federal government as well as the oil and gas industry. The possible reversal of Act 544 (passed as SB 469) in the courts and the eventual repeal of certain provisions of the Jones' Act, which hinder international companies from bidding on coastal restoration projects, would greatly help our efforts.

After this trip, I am more confident that Louisiana is making some significant strides in tackling our state's coastal crisis. I presented a seminar on what I learned to my colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences at LSUS, and I am looking forward to sharing all of this new knowledge with the students in PHSC 106 next semester.

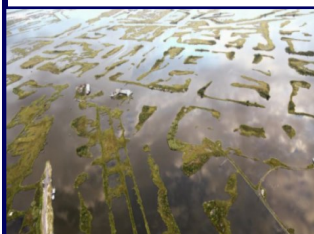
-By Brian Salvatore  
Department of Physics  
LSU Shreveport



Shrimper Timmy Melancon, along with his wife Phyllis and son, "Tee-Tim" on Bayou Lafourche in Leeville, LA. Timmy said to me, "Brian, we've already sunk; that bayou used to be 30 feet wide." It's about 350 feet wide now.



A successful fringe marsh restoration



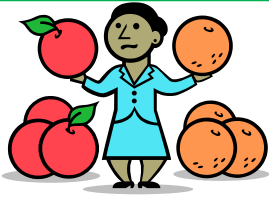
A whole series of eroded oil and gas pipeline ditches and access canals



A brand new restoration project near Lake Hermitage (this had been open water just a few months ago).... "instant wetlands from dredged Mississippi River sediment"

## OGB RELEASES BENEFITS COMPARISON

The latest move by the Office of Group Benefits in its losing battle to improve its images among state employees is the release of a dazzlingly complex, 11x17" table comparing the benefits of its six health plans. Although it would take a Minotaur with the added skill-set of a Houdini to find a way around this labyrinth of a chart, the message comes into clear focus when looking at the deductibles and the out-of-pocket maxima, the former of which have reached \$4,000.00 per annum and the latter of which have soared as high as \$20,000.00. Considering that the average classified employee in Louisiana earns around \$40K *including benefits*, which is comparable to less than \$30K pre-tax cash income, the paying of that deductible would plunge most Louisiana households into poverty. A worker who fell into financial exigency owing to such limited insurance would likely turn to the charity hospitals, thus becoming a great liability for the state than the cost of a realistic if not humane insurance policy.



## LSU ATHLETICS FORGETS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In one of the strangest events to date in the semi-supernatural world of big-time collegiate athletics, the LSU Athletic Department released, on November 11<sup>th</sup>, a mass-distribution email directing a warning at those who articulated unpopular views. The Athletic Department announced that it felt “deeply sorry” because “a small minority of people chose to diminish the image of our great university by engaging in a profane chant directed toward Coach Saban.” Remarkable in this guarded apology is the central concern not for misdeeds but for “image;” equally startling is the lack of commitment to protecting the speech rights of “small minorities” (of course, there aren’t many *large* minorities these days). Sectarian, the would-be apology covertly invokes religious duty. The core evil in the chant arises from its status as “profane” vis-à-vis the temple of football. Despite its penitent tone, the apology leads directly into a threat: “in the future, we will make every effort to identify those who choose to act in this manner and make sure they know they are no longer welcome in our stadium.” Exactly what procedures will be followed in this effort at impromptu justice and exactly what measures will send the “unwelcome” message remain unclear. So does the opinion of the Athletic Department regarding what counts as forbidden speech and so does the identity of the enforcers for this ad hoc policy.



## LSU BOARD: ADMINISTRATIVE RAISE SPREE, HIDDEN PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Attendees at LSU Board meetings are accustomed to perusing the “Personnel Actions,” published accounts of salary changes for recipients of compensation over \$100,000.00 or for wage earners in certain regulation-intensive categories. At its latest Board meeting, the LSU Supervisors, whose eagerness for work has yet to be evidenced, surrendered to campus administrations its supervisory authority over salaries less than \$250,000.00, thus also shutting down the regular flow of information regarding the range of salaries in which the greatest inequities occur and where the greatest public scrutiny would be required. If the last issues of the “Personnel Actions” is any indication of things to come, the donning of cloaks might be justified. In its last public salary action, the Board handed out 4% raises to no less than twenty-four administrative personnel at the New Orleans medical campus, LSUHSC-New Orleans. Some of those raises reached into the five-figure range. Additionally, the Supervisors conferred whopping \$24K and \$29K on administrators in the business department at a campus where the illnesses seem to be as much financial as physical. The LSU Faculty Senate will henceforth file monthly public records requests so as to ensure that salary information reaches faculty.



## LIFT2 ACCELERATES INTO SECOND STAGE

Thanks to the sedulous efforts of Nicole Honoree, LIFT2, the LSU System granting program that supports the prototyping or similar pre-market preparation of ideas and inventions, is accelerating into the second phase of its distinguished post-launch trajectory. Lighting the booster engine with the match of money, Honoree has convinced the otherwise slow-moving Supervisors to pump another two million of invention royalty money into the program, thereby beginning a continuing acceleration of this rocket toward prosperity. Better, Honoree has consistently maintained the interdisciplinary character of this program, wresting it from those who would orient “tech transfer” to the service of industry and ensuring that inventors and idea-makers in unexpected disciplines and on far-flung campuses can continue to shoot for the moon. Congratulations to Nicole and her team of merry money maneuverers for a job well done!



## HOTEL PLANNER OR HOTEL CONSPIRACY?

There being nothing like the appearance of a gang attack to galvanize opposition, Louisiana once again intensified statewide faculty cooperation when it attempted to impose new regulations not on every aspect of travel but on the booking of hotels. In early November, straight out of that blue sky in which airplanes fly, came the announcement that all state employees would subsequently be required to book their hotel rooms through an online vendor called [HotelPlanner](#), about which no one had previously heard and which burst onto the scene as the favored solution to economic woes after faculty had been told for years that a succession of travel agents (the most recent of which is Shorts Travel) were also the sole solution to all our troubles. Suspicions regarding HotelPlanner and the actors behind it began to rise on discovery that LSU System campuses were not participating in the mandate, an exemption that the state massaged by noting that LSU had not *formally* applied for an exemption but had simply declined to join the new travel tribe.

**HotelPlanner**

Generic HotelPlanner logo conceals a complex story

An assortment of faculty activists at University of Louisiana schools such as Southeastern, Louisiana Tech, and McNeese began a series of inquiries both to on-campus financial offices and to the state Department of Administration. Those queries prompted a series of cautions and evasions that culminated in responses from the Department of Administration to fifteen questions posed by a faculty operative. Those responses proved less than informative. The query about whether there had been a bidding process for the hotel booking contract drew only a “yes”; a follow-on request for details discovered that bid requests had been sent to over 1,500 vendors but that only one respondent met the requirements, a result that those experienced in state government recognize as the outcome of a tailored search in which the requirements are written in such a fashion that only the pre-selected vendor can fulfil them.

Further investigation of HotelPlanner revealed an assortment of mysteries. Although HotelPlanner discloses little about itself on the “about us” menu on its web site, careful inquiry shows that this corporation arose from the efforts of two entrepreneurs who, in the course of ten years, have created a worldwide hotel holding company on a gigantic scale that would normally take many decades to build (faculty activists have yet to determine the impact of an apparent conflict of interest in which a hotel operator reports prices for other hotel chains). HotelPlanner seems somewhat less than American; its offices in Las Vegas and West Palm Beach appear to be satellites of larger operations in Hong Kong and London. The states that use HotelPlanner have conservative, even tea party governors. Money laundering or conspiracy theories, anyone?



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### WHO WE ARE:

**An independent advocacy organization formed to serve LSU faculty and graduate assistants**

### OUR GOALS:

- Securing regular, periodic raises for faculty
- Improving starting salaries for Instructors
- Protecting and improving health and retirement benefits

### CONTACT:

**Mike Russo, 6923louis@gmail.com**



# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

## *Jersey Boys* (Clint Eastwood, 2014)

Reviewed by Carl Freedman (2014)

Filmmakers, like other artists, ought to be judged not only by the heights of which they are sometimes capable but also by what they achieve when they are operating at less than their very best. By this criterion, perhaps no living American director ranks higher than Clint Eastwood. He has made several of the supreme masterpieces of current American cinema: for instance, *Unforgiven* (1992)—arguably the greatest Western made by anyone since the death of John Ford—and *Mystic River* (2003), as complex and compelling a cinematic meditation on the nature and ramifications of violence as I can think of. Then, just below this level, there are his near-great films: among others, *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), an unconventionally powerful war film and an all but unique attempt by a quintessentially American artist to make a Japanese film; *Changeling* (2008), a brilliantly gripping, terrifying thriller and, like Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), one of the definitive film treatments of official corruption in Los Angeles; and *Gran Torino* (2008), a profound character study of masculinity in a changing America. Further down in the scale of aesthetic value, even Eastwood's films that are unlikely ever to be studied as masterworks of the art nearly always deliver solid, interesting entertainment: *Invictus* (2009) engagingly, if a bit sentimentally, dramatizes a significant incident in the sporting life of the newly democratic South Africa, while *J. Edgar* (2011) is an absorbing, though very incomplete, biopic about the monstrous founder and long-time director of the FBI. We might contrast Eastwood with Francis Coppola, one of his few peers among current American filmmakers. Coppola's most minor films are of interest because they are the work of the man who made the *Godfather* trilogy (1972-1990)—for me perhaps the single greatest achievement of American film—*The Conversation* (1974), and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). But Coppola's name on a film is no certain guarantee of two thoroughly entertaining hours. Eastwood's almost always is.

*Jersey Boys*, Eastwood's latest, is likely, I believe, to rank with his lesser efforts, but remains a valuable, if minor, achievement. Based on Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice's wildly popular Broadway musical of the same title, the film tells the story of the Four Seasons (also called Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons), the American rock group known for their romantic lyrics, doo-wop harmonies, and powerful falsetto singing. Coming of age in the 1950s, the band burst upon the national scene in 1962 with their breakthrough signature hit, "Sherry"; and they went on to dominate American rock music of the early 1960s like no other group except the Beach Boys. Like the Beach Boys, and like very few other American bands of the time, they even managed to survive the British invasion of American rock launched by the Beatles' appearance on US television in 1964. Eventually their popularity waned, and the band has long ceased to exist; Frankie Valli remains its only member still performing live. But, as the popularity of the musical play suggests, their songs retain a substantial and intense following. If the Four Seasons never attained the wide influence or artistic rigor of the very greatest American rock performers of the 1950s and 1960s—from Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley, to Bob Dylan, to the Jefferson Airplane and Creedence Clearwater Revival—they did master an appealing sound that was unmistakably their own and nobody else's.

Eastwood's film centers on the lives and interactions of the band's four members. The artistic core of the group are Frankie Valli (John Lloyd Young) and Bob Gaudio (Erich Bergen). Frankie, of course, is the lead singer. Though all the Seasons sing very well,

Frankie has the truly extraordinary, soaring voice that defines the Four Seasons sound. But Bob—the last member of the group to join, who serves as its songwriter and keyboard player as well as a back-up singer—is the person who really understands what can be done with Frankie's voice: which, as the film opens, is being used merely to entertain customers in the barber shop where Frankie works as an apprentice. Bob writes the music that enables Frankie to put the group on the map. Then there is Tommy DeVito (Vincent Piazza), who considers himself the group's boss. He handles the band's management, negotiating with club owners and recording executives and dealing with the Four Seasons' financial affairs. Tommy is also the group's tough guy, always challenging the other members with his aggressive machismo. Finally, there is the bass baritone Nick Massi (Michael Lomenda). His role seems accurately reflected in his own rueful statement, made to explain why he left the group at the height of its success, that he was the Ringo of the Four Seasons.

Much of the material in the film's narrative is the sort of thing familiar in a good deal of rock biography. We see the Seasons' rise from being a struggling neighborhood band happy to perform in bars or bowling alleys to their spectacular national stardom. "Sherry" goes to the number-one spot on the rock charts, and is soon followed in that position by "Big Girls Don't Cry" and "Walk Like a Man." We see, also, the familiar tribulations that often accompany a rock group's triumphs: from the clash of rival egos within the band, to the corrosive effects that long weeks and months on the road have on the Seasons' relationships with one another and with their seldom seen families back home. Some of their problems, though, are more specific to themselves: most notably, Tommy's habit of embezzling large amounts of the group's money in desperate, vain attempts to cover his gambling debts—which have been incurred with the kind of bookies who, shall we say, are not inclined to deal with deadbeat debtors by consulting their attorneys.

Many of the most memorable scenes in *Jersey Boys* are devoted to exploring the conflicts and differences within the group. Nick's best speech comes as Tommy's thefts are becoming known. But Nick does not seem primarily concerned with financial issues. He has been sharing hotel rooms with Tommy for ten years, and delivers a long, impassioned speech complaining about his roommate's disgusting personal hygiene. Much is also made of the differences in background between Bob and the rest of the group. Tommy, Nick, and Frankie all come from tough New Jersey urban neighborhoods, where petty crime and months behind bars are almost as much a normal part of a boy's growing-up as driving a car or going out with girls. But Bob is a clean-cut suburban intellectual who quotes T. S. Eliot; and he is horrified when the Seasons spend a few nights in jail for having ducked out of a hotel without paying (Tommy's fault, of course). Bob protests to his friends that, unlike them, he does *not* have a police record. "It's never too late to start," Tommy cheerfully replies. Tommy is the most mobbed up of the Seasons, and it is implied that he might never have become a full-time professional musician if his career as a gangster had been going more successfully (it is worth noting that Vincent Piazza comes to the film from his excellent portrayal of Charlie "Lucky" Luciano in all 57 episodes of *Boardwalk Empire* [2010-2014], HBO's brilliant dramatic series about the birth of modern American organized crime).

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Indeed, *Jersey Boys* is not only a musical biopic but also contains elements of a genre that Eastwood, for all his versatility, has previously had little to do with: the mob movie (*Mystic River* deals with crime but not with any large-scale criminal organization that exercises social and political influence throughout the culture in which it is embedded). Eastwood seems here to be conducting an implied dialogue with Martin Scorsese—like Coppola one of his rare equals among his contemporaries—and especially the Scorsese of *GoodFellas* (1990), which to my mind is the greatest of all mob movies outside Coppola's *Godfather* series (to which Eastwood's film also once alludes). Though structurally a secondary character, the presiding presence of *Jersey Boys* is, in a sense, one Gyp DeCarlo (played by the always reliable Christopher Walken), a local crime boss and, as Tommy gives us to understand (in one of the speeches directly to the audience that each of the Seasons occasionally delivers), the man you need to see if you want to get anything done in New Jersey. Gyp is very much a Scorsese-style mobster: a street-level neighborhood boss like Paulie Cicero (Paul Sorvino) in *GoodFellas*, with an outgoing style and manner that contrasts with Coppola's aloof, quasi-aristocratic Corleones in their heavily guarded mansions and chauffeured luxury cars. There are stories that, when Brickman and Elice (who here reprise their Broadway work by serving as Eastwood's screenwriters) were creating the original stage version of *Jersey Boys*, they were approached by former associates of the then deceased DeCarlo, who "suggested" that their old friend be portrayed respectfully. He is. Though his position as a mob boss is clear, we never see him doing or even ordering anything violent. Instead, we see him acting as the Seasons' conscientious mentor, dispensing advice that combines sweet reasonableness with avuncular concern. Early on, Tommy clearly hopes to impress Gyp sufficiently to gain an important position within his organization; but it becomes evident that, though Gyp uses Tommy to run minor errands (like picking up his dry cleaning), he neither likes nor trusts him enough to offer him anything better. Gyp has much warmer feelings toward Frankie, whom he adores for Frankie's hauntingly beautiful version of the song that happens to have been the favorite of Gyp's dead mother.

The connection of *Jersey Boys* to *GoodFellas* is in fact also quite direct, and not just a matter of stylistic affinity. In Scorsese's film, Joe Pesci delivers an unforgettable, Oscar-winning performance as the toughest of the tough guys, a Mafioso so unpredictably violent that even his closest friends and colleagues are scared of him. And what is the name of Pesci's character? Tommy DeVito. In *Jersey Boys* we learn that Pesci was indeed a teenage friend of the real-life DeVito and the other Seasons; presumably, the adult Pesci persuaded Scorsese to name his character after this tough guy

he knew from youth (the character is called Tommy DeSimone in Nicholas Pileggi's *Wiseguy*, the 1985 nonfiction book on which *GoodFellas* is based). Ironically, the real-life Pesci (portrayed by Joseph Russo) is, as Eastwood's film presents him, not tough at all. He is a slightly flabby, insecure, ingratiating sort whom Tommy barely tolerates—though Pesci does provide the Seasons with the all-important suggestion to hire Bob Gaudio. In a double irony, Pesci and the real DeVito are destined to cross paths again, much later in life. The film's final scene takes us forward to 1990, when the long disbanded Four Seasons get together for a reunion concert on the occasion of being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In an aside to the audience, Tommy informs us that he is now working as a personal assistant to Joe Pesci—the faded rock star now serving the successful movie star whom he once looked down on.

So there are many good things in *Jersey Boys*. I first viewed it under grueling conditions—crammed into a cheap seat on a transatlantic flight, peering at the tiny screen on the back of the seat in front of me—and, even so, I enjoyed every minute. If it doesn't qualify as one of Eastwood's great or even near-great films, it is, I think, mainly because it never completely decides just what kind of film it wants to be. There is not really enough about the mob to make it a first-rate mob movie. As a biopic, it nicely introduces us to the Seasons, but doesn't let us know all that much about any of them. More screen time is devoted to Frankie than to any of the others, but Vincent Piazza is by far the best actor of the four central players, and he makes Tommy the Season we really remember. As a musical—which is where John Lloyd Young as Frankie shines—*Jersey Boys* delivers some wonderful performances. Yet most of the musical numbers feel a bit more restrained and documentary-like than one might wish; a rock musical, I think, ought to have more sheer *exuberance*. Eastwood is as musically literate a filmmaker as one could name; but his basic allegiances are to jazz, not rock. He is himself a talented jazz composer and pianist, and *Bird*, his 1988 biopic about Charlie Parker, is one of the best cinematic representations of the jazz scene that we possess. Perhaps Eastwood doesn't feel wholly comfortable with the particular kind of raw energy that rock often involves.

Even so, the film is worth the price of admission for the music alone. If you are old enough to remember the band's *annus mirabilis* of 1962, *Jersey Boys* will provide you with plenty of enjoyable trips down a musical memory lane. If you barely know who the Four Seasons were, the film will provide a reasonably solid introduction to their songs. I will end with a small complaint. Though many of own favorite Four Seasons numbers are here, the song I have always considered the Seasons' very best—"Let's Hang On!", from 1965—is missing.

## Tip of the Month

*Symphonie van fijne smaken*



*Eigen fabriikaat bonbons*

Devotees of chocolate know that the best blessings of the bounteous brown bean often turn up in the most unexpected places. So it is that Ames, Iowa, home of Iowa State University and the very epitome of the American way of life, now hosts an outlet of one of the finest chocolate manufacturers in Europe, Chocolaterie Stam of the Netherlands. Nestled in a small slot along Ames's Main Street, this unobtrusive storefront abounds in exquisite delicacies. [Stam](http://stam.nl) has long specialized in bonbons filled with an assortment of ganaches. The secret to the savor of these petite pleasures is the substitution of crème fraîche for the more traditional sweet cream as the foundation of the filling. The result is certain incomparable texture that amplifies the filling flavors while imparting an extra touch of refinement. The Ames Stam shop has no independent web site; it is best to call the proprietors, Anne and Terry Stark, at 515-232-0656 or email them at [terry@stamchocolate.com](mailto:terry@stamchocolate.com). These splendid chocolates will cut a fine figure as a stocking-stuffer for your favorite connoisseur!



# Do you ever feel like you are underappreciated? Why not submit a nomination for being an outstanding teacher?



## GEORGE H. DEER DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

**General Description:** This award is made in memory of George H. Deer, Ph.D., former Dean of University College (1959-1966) and a distinguished member of the faculty of the College of Education for over 25 years (1940-1966). The purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding teaching at LSU.

**Recognition:** The recipient is presented with an inscribed plaque. An award of academic support or professional development (i.e. professional workshops, conferences and travel) will be provided in accordance with university guidelines and regulations governing this award. The support award **varies with a minimum of \$500** and an **engraved plaque**.

**Eligibility:** The nomination open to any LSU faculty member who teaches courses **for which University College students are enrolled, both the Center for Freshman Year (UCFY) and the Center for Advising and Counseling (UCAC)**. As a general rule, 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.

**Criteria for Nomination and Selection:** Any system that attempts to assess and reward outstanding achievement in teaching must be flexible and individualistic. Moreover, the award should not be made solely on the basis of past performance without a look toward the future. The potential for growth should be considered equally important to past performance in the selection process. It is hoped that the recipient will move forward (perhaps to new tasks) with a great feeling of confidence and sense of purpose.

To accomplish these objectives the following characteristics are important considerations in determining the recipient of the award:

- A record of excellence in teaching.
- A record, which is indicative of a genuine interest in students.
- Outstanding relationships with teaching assistants, faculty, and staff.
- Demonstrated leadership in the promotion of better instructional programs.

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TEACHING ASSISTANT AWARD

**Description:** Within graduate universities teaching assistants generally play a major role in the instructional program of undergraduate students. At the freshman level (1000- and 2000- level courses) teaching assistants make up a significant portion of the instructional program.

While the importance of the teaching assistant is easily established in terms of University management data, it is not uncommon to find local situations where teaching assistants function as if the teaching duties are of secondary importance to their own program of study and research. It is natural for the teaching assistant to yield to pressures from their own course work, language exams, general exams and dissertations and, as a result, not to provide the high quality teaching which should be a condition of their appointment to the teaching assistantship.

The Alumni Association Teaching Assistant Award is intended to recognize outstanding teaching ability and service to students. The award acknowledges and emphasizes the important role teaching assistants play in providing quality academic instruction.

**Recognition:** The recipient will be presented with a **cash award of \$1,000** and an **engraved plaque**.

**Eligibility:** The nominations are limited to graduate teaching assistants who have an academic or fiscal year appointment.

**Criteria for Nominations and Selection:** An individual nominated for an Alumni Association

Teaching Assistant Award should possess the following attributes:

- A record for excellence in teaching.
- A record, which is indicative of a genuine interest in students.
- Outstanding relationships with other teaching assistants, faculty and staff.
- Demonstrated leadership in the promotion of better instructional programs.

**Nominations must be submitted electronically no later than Friday, January 9, 2015 to Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock at [jcraddock@lsu.edu](mailto:jcraddock@lsu.edu).**

**For more information contact:**

Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock  
Assistant Director of Development and Public Relations  
University College  
150 Allen Hall  
D 225-578-5342  
[jcraddock@lsu.edu](mailto:jcraddock@lsu.edu)





Do you ever feel like you are underappreciated as an advisor? Why not send in a nomination for being an outstanding advisor?



## ADVISOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

**General Description:** This award is based on the national criteria of the [National Academic Advising Association \(NACADA\)](#). The award is designed to honor individuals and institutions who are making significant contributions to the improvement of academic advising and to disseminate information about these contributions to other professionals in the field. Only one nominee will be selected. The nominee selected from the campus will become LSU's University College Advisor of the Year and his/her name will be submitted as LSU's representative for national competition as National Advisor of the Year.

**Eligibility:** Any individual employed as an academic advisor at LSU may be nominated. The nominee need not be a NACADA member. Previous winners of national awards and certificates of merit are not eligible.

**Recognition:** The recipient will be presented with a **cash award of \$1,000** and an **engraved plaque**.

**Criteria:** The Selection Committee will evaluate nominations on the evidence of effective advising qualities and practices that distinguish the nominee as an outstanding academic adviser. Such evidence may include, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Strong interpersonal skills
- Availability to advisees, faculty, or staff
- Frequency of contact with advisees
- Appropriate referral activity
- Use and dissemination of appropriate information sources
- Evidence of student success rate, by advisor or department
- Caring, helpful attitude toward advisees, faculty, and staff
- Meeting advisees in informal settings
- Participation in and support of intrusive advising to build strong relationships with advisees
- Monitoring of student progress toward academic and career goals
- Mastery of institutional regulations, policies, and procedures
- Ability to engage in, promote, and support developmental advising
- Evidence of working in an academic advising program that supports [NACADA's Core Values](#).
- Evidence of working in an advising program that reflects the standards of good practice in the [CAS Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising](#).
- Participation in and support of advising development programs
- Perception by colleagues of nominee's advising skills
- Institutional recognition of nominee for outstanding advising

**Nominations must be submitted electronically no later than Friday, January 9, 2015 to Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock at [jcraddock@lsu.edu](mailto:jcraddock@lsu.edu).**

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