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Faculty Senate Newsletter, February 2015

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Faculty Senate Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

An ivy-league legend holds that early twentieth-century literary scholar George Lyman Kittredge once passed a doctoral student who had flubbed his dissertation defense when, upon asking the candidate about his smoking preferences, Kittredge discovered that the lad had a keen eye for quality cigars. Although we can thank our lucky stars that Kittredge's kind of benevolent autocracy—his readiness to use unchecked authority to show off his combined power and tastefulness—is a thing of the past, we can also at least minimally mourn the passing of eccentricity and of the mix of moxie and eagerness that induces acts of inventive individualism. We can ask whatever happened to academic *character*.

Thumbing through the pages of an educational insider's publication such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* will reveal a remarkable uniformity, both in appearance and utterance, among the academic leadership caste. The plurality of leaders reiterate the "thin man" theme: male persons neither too large nor too small without much of a physical presence who apparel themselves in shades of grey. Perhaps thirty percent of the pictured figures explore a female version of this same picture, although, among women leaders, a small, minimally colored accessory is permitted. The remaining ten percent of the persons pictured follow the aforementioned norms but also present some contextual sign or wearable emblem of their diversity, perhaps by being photographed near a relevant government agency or donning a lapel pin associated with a group-affiliated institution. The utterances of the reputed leaders in all the aforementioned categories are carefully scripted to play down even the minor variations that the pictures carefully conjure.

To some extent, the uniformity in leader behavior arises from the influence of executive search firms, which carefully craft "leadership profiles" for every position. These profiles seem to call for a universality and immensity of talent but, in their relentless demand for someone who allegedly knows a little bit about everything but knows nothing to so great an extent as to seem unbalanced, favor candidates who have long cultivated caution. Another factor is the enlargement of selection committees. The more people a candidate sees, the more that applicant will learn to not to make striking or original statements, but to trim, balance, and dodge. A striking assertion about astronomy, after all, might seem like a lack of equilibrium to someone working in the payroll or budget areas. Self-protective faculty members, too, approach the candidate evaluation process in a spirit of caution rather than experimentation. Worrying about "what might happen if," they look for candidates with recognizable sorts of experience rather than those who have explored new fields or veered from the standard routes to administrative advancement. The increased competition today for even beginning academic jobs has also encouraged the selection of non-threatening candidates who will surely make tenure and quickly achieve "productivity" without the vacillations attending excellent if offbeat appointees.

It is easy enough and also probably accurate to blame the Louisiana public, with its unrealistic faith that more can be done with less and with its suspicion of book learning, for the dire financial straits in which Louisiana higher education now finds itself. It would, however, also be helpful to remember that the collective downplaying, by many if not most academic professionals, of characteristics such as daring, wit, irreverence, novelty, and even eccentricity has contributed to the present leadership crisis by signaling that academic constituencies value conformity. Academic leaders today, whether in Louisiana or Nebraska or Vermont, are fond of citing "the new normal" and of calling on academic professionals to find some way to adapt to it. That reflex to reflect rather than to change—to tackle the "new normal" by shaping oneself to it—results from a drive to compromise, conformity, caution, and plain old copying that has become the norm in an academic culture that is desperately trying to defend, justify, and otherwise sustain itself amidst an assortment of threats. The next time that you are on a hiring committee and might be tempted to go for the safe candidate, think about the limits of "the new normal" and then reconsider the value of eccentricity and plain old courage.



Kevin Cope

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Higher Education Headliner



Barbara Hasek

As Barbara Hasek's colleague, Sarah Little, so succinctly puts it, Barbara Hasek is a "passionate teacher and passionate for the school." Hasek loves coming to work, and that feeling is contagious. A transplant from Ohio, Hasek came to Louisiana to attend the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where she earned both her MA and PhD. She became very interested in crustaceans, and her early training landed her in a post-doctoral position at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. Eventually, though, teaching called to her, and she knew that a small institution with plenty of student interaction would be ideal. Hence, she chose to apply for a position at Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC), and she has been there happily ever since.

Her devotion can be measure not only by the ten office hours that she provides her students per week, but also by the additional hours she is willing to schedule in order to tutor students who need extra help and attention. Hasek explains that she has always been interested in both politics and social justice issues in addition to biology. Although Hasek does not get to do much research anymore, her teaching and being the president of the faculty senate at BRCC keeps her busy and allows her to combine her passions and interests.

Hasek became the faculty senate president as a means of staying involved in the university. She had previously been a student senator as an undergraduate, and having knowledge of the university's inner workings has fascinated her for a long time. Thus, becoming the president of the faculty senate was not a huge leap.

In being the faculty senate president, Hasek can mentor and aid in creating an overall optimistic atmosphere. Sometimes a person just needs a sympathetic ear, and Hasek provides that. She sees her job as helping her colleagues feel happy and stay calm so that they enjoy a pleasant working environment. When Hasek is thanked by a colleague, she knows that she has done her job and furthered her mission to make BRCC a wonderful place to work.

Also, Hasek has a lot of insight into the challenges and benefits of teaching at a community college. One of the challenges that instructors in general face is the negative view of community colleges. People tend to think that the quality of education is equivalent to the low cost, which is actually quite the opposite. A community college generally has smaller class sizes and that allows more one-on-one time with students. This is advantageous as community colleges cater to any number of diverse populations from students with disabilities to students from economically distressed backgrounds to veterans with undiagnosed

PTSD. This diversity, while adding an extra layer of complexity to the BRCC community than might be encountered at a traditional university, can be very stimulating and challenges instructors to be innovative and understanding when it comes to their students' learning needs. In addition to being teachers, instructors at BRCC act as part therapist, part career planner, and part cheerleader for their students. Although sometimes challenging, this dynamic is a positive for the student body as a whole.

Unfortunately, like most higher education in the state of Louisiana and in the United States in general, BRCC is underfunded. The university is at capacity in every building that is habitable, and even some offices have been turned into classrooms. They are in serious need of new buildings to house the burgeoning student population. In addition, in order to save money, the university does not have classes on Fridays. This means that classes have to be longer in order to meet the required hours. In addition, staff has not gotten merit pay in over five years, let alone had COLA implemented. Instructors, just like in many universities, are being asked to do more for less pay, which includes taking on more administrative duties.

Yet, BRCC staff is still confident that they can make great strides in the next five years. To this end, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) is currently implementing the LA2020 plan to help better prepare Louisiana's community college students to enter an increasingly high-tech workforce. One goal is to graduate more students who then go on to get "Tier 1," or high demand, skilled labor jobs such as welding and pipe-fitting. In addition, there are trade and technical programs being created that serve specific needs, such as a computer mechanics training program subsidized by folks like the owner of Allstar Motors. Other programs include avionics, nursing, and culinary certification, all of which LCTCS leadership hopes to expand as part of their efforts to meet the growing needs of the Baton Rouge community. An additional objective of LA2020 is to increase the total number of students served by Louisiana's community colleges, of which BRCC is the second largest after Delgado in New Orleans.

Hasek is incredibly well-informed and dialed into both the BRCC community and the Baton Rouge community at large. Her passion for social justice and for teaching make her an integral part of BRCC, and she helps make BRCC a place where instructors enjoy teaching and students can find the support that they need to reach their goals.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman

IS PARIS BURNING, OR IS IT NATCHITOCHES?

The latest entrant in the expensive billboard war among campus student recruiters is a new super-poster for Northwestern State University aimed at southbound traffic on Interstate 49 in the vicinity or milepost 112. The sign bears the NSULA logo and the word "Demons," presumably referencing the totemic identity of the NSULA sports teams. The billboard shows blood-red flames swirling up around the aforementioned magic words and symbols, suggesting that Don Juan might have had a go at NSULA basketball before being swept into the underworld. Might NSULA benefit from an exorcism (our governor, as we know, provides them)?

Newsletter staffers who spotted the seemingly possessed sign were zipping along too quickly to capture a picture. The *Newsletter* will gladly publish any reader-submitted photo of this regional as well as spiritual oddity.



SOUTHERN TOP JOB MERGER: INNOVATE MEANS IMITATE



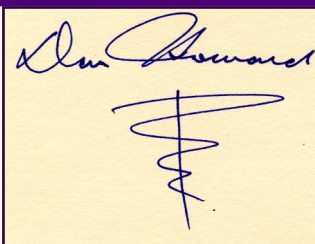
Southern supervisors send system president Ronald Mason into whirlpool of speculation

Learned heads around the state were shaking as the Southern University Board of Supervisors once again undercut Southern University's perennial claim to uniqueness by copying the minimally successful rearrangement of the LSU top echelon. Once again bypassing faculty calls for consultation and for a planning process that showed respect for faculty expertise, the Southern Board of Supervisors voted to combine the offices of Baton Rouge campus Chancellor and Southern University System head. The vote came on the heels of the not altogether felicitous discovery by Southern University Faculty Senate leadership officials, who had chatted their LSU A&M counterparts, that the much-touted consolidation of executive roles at LSU A&M had not, as advertised, turned that educational behemoth into a new version of ever-successful Ohio State but had instead left the "main" campus rudderless, directionless, and with a big case of absent-father/absent-mother syndrome. Noting the uneven success of top-level searches around Louisiana—one such search recently attracted fewer than a half-dozen applications for a job for which the salary pushes a half-million—the aforementioned learned heads were also wondering whether the apparent compliance of the Southern Board with the Southern Faculty Senate vote of no confidence in Southern System President Ronald Mason, who was allegedly not offered a contract renewal, might turn out to be a sham. Owing to the short time between the consolidation and the end of the Mason contract, those experienced in time-consuming executive searches surmised, a contract renewal for this phoenix among university presidents might be in the offing. The deletion of pre-Jindal appointees from the Southern Board and the appearance of a new ensemble of Jindal-dependent Supervisors fueled speculation that "the fourth floor" would appoint as President-Chancellor someone with more reason for loyalty to the governor than to the faculty. So much for the role of Louisiana's biggest HBCU as a voice for liberation.

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LSUA TOPS GROWTH CHARTS

Historical memory in Louisiana institutions is notoriously short, but those who have followed the grumblings of Louisiana's nay-sayers remember that, only a short time ago, these credential-free experts were forecasting the closure of LSU of Alexandria, were calling for its return to two-year status, and were suggesting its consolidation with local community colleges. Now, under the stewardship of Chancellor Dan Howard, astounding new "numbers" have demonstrated the vitality of LSUA and have revealed the growth potential of four-year education in central Louisiana. Over the course of the last year—Spring 2014 to Spring 2015—overall enrollment soared twenty percent. Some of the new students emerge from dual enrollment programs, but all bear the indelible impress of LSU of Alexandria. And all are paying: LSUA tuition revenue skyrocketed over twenty-three percent, attaining values never previously imagined by the bean counters alongside the campus near the cotton fields. In the background of these already impressive statistics is a host of "metrics" demonstrating a groundswell of enthusiasm for an LSUA education. Congratulations to Chancellor Howard for putting his signature on a campus where the subtext is the excellence of the faculty.



The distinguished signature of Dan Howard—reminiscent of a William Blake engraving—has metamorphosed the LSUA campus

"SECU" TAKES ANOTHER STRANGE TWIST, BOASTS THEN VANISHES

Regular readers of the *Newsletter* have followed the strange history of the "SECU" or "[SEC University](#)," the much-hyped virtual university created by that athletic powerhouse, the Southeastern Conference, in an attempt to look committed to the quest for knowledge. The possessor of a strange history, SECU grew out of the SEC-sponsored Academic Leadership Development Program, an effort to cultivate new academic leaders which fell apart owing to its own dispersed leadership and owing to the discovery that institutions were using the program to reward persons who already occupied leadership positions. The next move for the SEC was the creation of a regional prize competition that conferred awards on the "top" professors in the region, all of whom turned out to work in highly funded, trendy fields of the "TED Talk"-eligible variety, an effort which also seems to have slipped out beyond radar coverage. The latest move in this curious story is the emergence of a newsletter, *SECU Quarterly*, which attempts to show the depth of SEC commitment to the learned pursuits through a quarterly online release that is one page in length and that includes three stories tallying at most three-hundred words. There, the SEC declares its support for fields such as "entrepreneurship" and engineering—fields that would seem not to veer to far from the big-money habits of the SEC. The final twist to this narrative is the invisibility of the *SECU Newsletter*, which seems only to reach insiders on the SEC mailing list. The "winter 2015" issue eludes conventional internet searches; the latest issue available on the SEC web site is its predecessor. Perhaps those who want to learn how the SEC underwrites learning by supporting "ideas that become new products," per one of the three story in this slender production, will come up with an idea for a search device that can locate this elusive poop sheet.



SECU—The Invisible University



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'm always amazed at the difference between your insightful geniality and the reality that I, as a plain old working stiff, experience in my occasional dealings with "HRM" [Human Resources Management] folks. Admittedly, I'm not lucky enough to be on the campus where you're a leader, but I am situated on one of the larger campuses in the LSU syndicate. Sometimes, when I go to HRM, I find dedicated and helpful persons; but other times, I encounter apathy or even obstructive behavior that falls somewhat short of what we would expect from a "customer service" ethic. So I'm wondering, A G, about how HRM departments, both at LSU and elsewhere, receive, solicit, and use input from those whom HRM serves. How are HRM people evaluated? Where are the policies about such evaluation processes? How can I make my voice heard when I run into trouble?

Thanks, A G, you are the shiny buttons on the cat's pajamas!

Your fan,

Renaldo in Livonia, Louisiana



The Response

There are several ways to run a Human Resources function. Most of them are the wrong way.

Long-term clerks who view their job as processing transactions too often staff Human Resources functions. This is particularly true in the public sector. They exert no creativity and they attempt no deviation from the standard practices. These folks have become generally obsolete as a result of the installation of computerized enterprise systems and so they attempt to hold onto authority and their jobs by restricting access to information. As bad as that scenario may seem there are worse designs in place and they tend to be the departments that simply find the best answer to always be "No." These folks never make a mistake because they never agree to do anything that is outside that which has already been done. While much of the blame can be placed on a mentality that believes novelty is a burden it also can be the fault of state governments placing a "one size fits all" approach in place. Here in Louisiana higher education suffers from that approach. Many of the rules designed to control the work of the Department of Corrections are also applied to LSU. Despite our efforts to explain that we have students with the ability to make choices and not inmates the University is burdened with government rules that have no legitimacy within Higher Education. Sometimes we are burdened with enforcing rules we know are just plain dumb.

Of course one can blame the state, and the people in Human Resources but we also have to look at the management of the institution and assess its role in organizational design and strategy. In the end how Human Resources or any other staff department operates is a reflection of the leadership of the institution. Leadership that is self-serving, insulated from the community, and disdainful of its workforce will reward managers and departments who behave in a similar fashion. The best staff offices are usually working for the best managers. So if you have a problem with HR you might find that the behavior you object to is being reinforced at a higher level.

As to how does a good HR office receive, solicit and use input from the organization it is suppose to serve...it starts with interaction.

Effective HR offices are using "imbedded staff" whenever possible to provide service. Individuals within Human Resources are assigned to work directly with certain departments. An example would be that the College of Science will have someone in HR who is assigned specifically to work with that college, meet with staff regularly, assist with recruitment activities, and provide a single point of reference. While that person may not be an expert in all aspects of HR they are able to take the questions or complaints from the College of Science and insure that answers are provided. Instead of transferring the questioner to three different offices the HR staff member assigned will reach out to their colleagues and come back with an answer. Additionally, HR offices have to be mobile. Members of the department have to be free to leave their office and meet with co-workers in other departments in order to provide opportunities to ask questions. When possible all service offices should engage in some level of surveying to learn as much as they can about what their colleagues really think about their performance.

HR is still primarily a control function that is based in the economics of the organization it serves. During times when raises are not given out the general satisfaction with HR offices decreases. During such times HR's role is really more of a compliance function than strategic management. When little or no money is available HR's role is to manage the compensation process based on assumptions of effectiveness rather than equity. Thus, we are in effect managing a process not designed to reward equally but rather a rewards system based on the opinions of senior management in regard to need and performance. High levels of dissatisfaction during such times are the result of several factors with the most common being - 1. Few people view themselves as less capable or barely adequate performers, 2. Many managers do not accurately use objective measures to manage performance, and 3. A significant number of managers avoid engaging in frank discussions with their employees about performance.

—Continued on page 5

Perhaps the area that Human Resources can provide the most effective support to the organization is by recruiting high quality personnel and that involves working with departments and search committees to locate large pools of quality applicants. Of course it is important for HR professionals to remember that their assistance must be limited. Human Resources can be helpful by assisting with the recruitment of applicants but they must refrain from being involved in the hiring process. HR's influence must end when the process of recruitment ends and the selection process begins.

Another area that HR can help is by providing employee advocacy in the areas of benefit design and implementation. HR offices should take the lead in reminding the state of the importance of adequate fringe benefit packages especially in regard to health insurance and pensions. Due to our connection with state government it is not uncommon to see an abdication on state campuses of HR's responsibility to demand that benefits be competitive and reflective of the needs of the workforce.

Finally, any good administrative office must be open to criticism and risk. From criticism we get the impetus to discover new and better ways to perform our duties. Staff managers who avoid risk cannot provide the full support necessary to recruit and retain critical faculty and staff. Too often we saddle institutions with administrators who work harder at keeping their job than doing their job. In my opinion an HR manager who is afraid of getting fired is a barrier to an organization's success.

Speaking of risk ...driving through Livonia Louisiana is risky business. That town is one of those communities in Louisiana where a significant proportion of their municipal revenue (nearly 50%) comes from fines and forfeitures. It is a speed trap and the town's financial infrastructure is based on writing tickets. So when driving through Pointe Coupee Parish I don't think I will be dropping in on Renaldo.



ANNOUNCING a STATEWIDE FORUM

"The Future of Louisiana Higher Education"
featuring
Legislators, Educators, and Community Leaders

Thursday, March 5, 2015

6:00 – 8:00 p. m.

Southern University Metro Center – Room 311
610 Texas Street • Shreveport, LA

Sponsored by faculty members of Louisiana

SUSLA • LSUS • SUBR • Grambling • LSU - Baton Rouge
Northwestern • LA Tech • Centenary • ULL • USL • ULM

BRCC CREATES STEM NEWSLETTER

Since *The Faculty Senate Newsletter* began its run in 2010, a spate of newsletters have hit the higher education stands, showing that, indeed, the pleasing form of flattery known as imitation can produce good results, including an increase in institutional transparency. Baton Rouge Community College faculty member and higher education advocate Barbara Hasek has drawn attention to the emergence of a fine digest of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) activity at the under-rated Florida Boulevard institution. The first release of the *BRCC STEM Newsletter*, which arrived at subscribers' boxes around Christmastime, includes no less than six pages of stories showing the vitality of science education on this most central of two-year campuses. Topics range from a plethora of prestigious guest lectures to an innovative, student-motivating Dean's challenge to the cultivation of STEM readiness in secondary schools—and more! Congratulations to the BRCC STEM faculty for generating the activity that their lively newsletter reports.



SKINNER STUMBLE UNDERLINES BOARD NEGLIGENCE



Strange World of Mr. Mum revives at LSU Supervisor meeting

Fans of the silent movie era always enjoy the low-key pratfalls of the deadpan comic school of Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd. A few oldies out there will remember the comic strip, *The Strange World of Mr. Mum*, in which a silent average Joe, lacking his usual prescription glasses, stumbles through strange experiences only to end up at “Joe’s Juice Bar” by way of recovery through a fruit drink. So it is that the opening act

for new LSU System General Counsel Thomas Skinner evoked the age of Charlie Chaplin and Major Hoople. Called on, at the Shreveport rendition of the LSU Board of Supervisors meeting, to announce the validity of the personnel actions, Skinner, who seemed to be distracted by a vision of the future, found that, in the auditory economy of the moment, silence was golden. Silent justice may have its place—think of the Supreme Court justices during the reading of the State of the Union message—and so we will wait to see what happens next time.

SMOKING HOTSPOTS TRIGGER NO-TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT INNOVATION

Faculty up and down the state continue to enjoy the fresh air drawn in by the various campus smoke-free initiatives that have emerged in the past year owing to legislation requiring that educational institution articulate a formal policy on the use of tobacco products at educational institutions. Reports from campuses around the state indicate a high level of compliance, but, somewhat to its embarrassment, the would-be “flagship” campus continues to experience not only occasional flare-ups but also to host an assortment of well-known hot spots, chief among which is the veranda fronting Middleton Library, where smokers routinely and flagrantly violate policy, occasionally even using signs proclaiming smoke-free status as ash trays. *Newsletter* undercover operatives have discovered a degree (and only a degree) of organization in an effort to ridicule this health-oriented policy. The LSU A&M Office of Academic Affairs, recognizing at long last that the attack on the tobacco-free policy is an attack on its own authority, has partnered with student government to create a kind of encouragement squad that will ask smokers to pause their on-campus fuming and will also warn violators that fines may be imposed. Additionally, a schedule of fines and sanctions for violation of the tobacco-free policy has also been released. Thanks and congratulations to LSU A&M OAA for coming up with a new strategy for the clearing of campus air.



SALARY LOGJAM IN WOODLEY INSTITUTIONS CLEARING

Up and down the state, faculty members have been favorably impressed with the geniality and the forthcoming habits of University of Louisiana System President Sandra Woodley, who, although not yet drawing unanimous agreement in all her actions, has laid foundations of future cooperation down to a depth far beyond the range of her predecessors, with their contrasting, rackety but not always effective jackhammer style. Colleagues everywhere have wondered when one of Woodley’s institutions would convert her good will into economic form via the delivery of a long overdue raise. Good news arrived in late January when the University of Louisiana at Lafayette announced “average” and “merit-based” “four percent” salary increases for faculty and staff. After a raise drought of more than half a decade, ULL faculty expressed joy, although outside observers note that the modifier “average” suggests that the actual raises will be rather smaller, once the usual diversions—equity increases, retention raises—diminish the raise pool. Certainly ULL officials might consider whether the “merit” in “merit raise” applies to administrations that have lacked the nerve to take a more forceful approach to state economic policies. Considering that no raises occur on any campus without consent from the top, kudos are due to System President Woodley for authorizing the first bold move toward salary fairness at a University of Louisiana campus.



LSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION FERTILIZES GRASSROOTS NETWORK

Through a series of visits and public appearances, new LSU Alumni Association President Cliff Vannoy has been announcing and promoting the new nationwide advocacy network, Tiger Advocates. According to Vannoy, “we formed Tiger Advocates in order to provide Tiger Nation with an easily accessible forum by which alumni, friends, future alumni, faculty, and staff can keep abreast of the latest budget crisis news stories and developments in the upcoming legislative session.” Plans include user-friendly interfaces that will help Tiger Advocates to contact legislators and to express their support for LSU. Although the network is LSU-specific, it may be of interest to all Louisiana higher education professionals owing to the universality of the funding crisis and the need to encourage legislators to support all institutions. Signing up is easy via an [intuitive web portal](#). An interview with Vannoy about the new network can be viewed on the [WBRZ](#) web site.

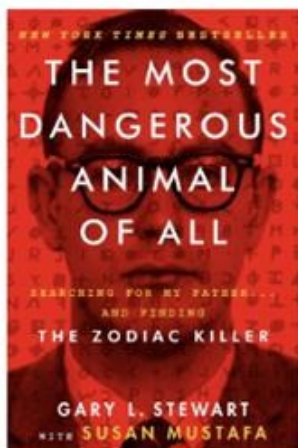


"An Evening with Great Authors" Book Talk, Reception & Book Signing

~ Thursday, March 19, 2015 @ 6pm ~
Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

LSU School of the Coast and Environment
Dalton Woods Auditorium
(Located on the corner of Nicholson & Nicholson Extension, next to Campus FCU)

Featuring: Gary L. Stewart and Susan Mustafa
Authors of the New York Times Bestseller
The Most Dangerous Animal of All



Ten years ago, Gary L. Stewart began writing a journal, chronicling every detail of his search for his father and his own identity, and the heartbreaking discoveries he makes along the way. That journal served as the basis for *The Most Dangerous Animal of All*, co-authored with Susan Mustafa.

Susan is also the co-author of *Dismembered*, written with Sue Israel, which chronicles the story of serial killer Sean Vincent Gillis, a Louisiana killer who confessed to the brutal murders and mutilations of eight women; and *Blood Bath*, about the life and crimes of serial killer Derrick Todd Lee, linked by DNA to the murders of seven Louisiana women. *Blood Bath* was written with Special Prosecutor Tony Clayton and Sue Israel.

Ticket Prices:
\$20 General Public
\$10 Senior Citizens (65+)
\$5 students



Presented by:

Purchase tickets at:

www.adultliteracyadvocates.org
225-383-1090 or at the door



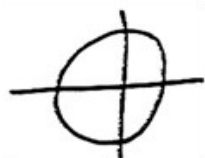
All proceeds benefit:

SPLENDID SIGNAGE ADORNS LSUA CAMPUS



ALFS President James Robinson admires new LSUA signage

Recent visitors to the campus of Louisiana State University of Alexandria have surely noted the magnificent new signs that aid visitors as they navigate that award-winning facility. Wondrous new stelae rise up here and there around the campus, presenting unfamiliar sojourners with clear directions in lucid fonts while echoing the LSU purple-and-gold theme, albeit without corny over-referentiality. Congratulations to the LSUA facilities folks as well as to champion Chancellor Dan Howard for upgrading to the best directional signage on any Louisiana campus (Howard's placards put those at LSU A&M to shame). Let's just hope that none of those television road-picker or antique shows try to make an offer for these fine works of commercial and graphic art!



Los Angeles Times



**ZODIAC LINKED TO
RIVERSIDE SLAYING**

**'Zodiac Killer' Warns
School Bus Children
May Be Next Victims!**

Gilbert and Sullivan Clue to Zodiac



New signage graces LSUA campus

GRAMBLING FACULTY INCH TOWARD SELF-DETERMINATION; WARRICK RETREATS



The Registry — a shield
against embarrassment

The administrative drama at Grambling State University has intensified during the last several months as faculty registered increasing discontent with the administration of interim Grambling President Cynthia Warrick. Last month, the *Newsletter* reported the undercover distribution of an embarrassing chart showing the checkered backgrounds, offbeat credentials, and heavy compen-

sation packages of a retinue or aides hired under the Warrick regime. As the search for a new permanent President for Grambling fell afoul of one mishap or obstruction or disclosure after another, rumors spread that interim President Warrick might remain in office for an undetermined period of time or might even emerge as a default candidate for the permanent post. That anxiety diminished when interim President Warrick announced a decision not to enter the race for the permanent appointment. What did not appear in Warrick's statement was any admission of errors. Rather, Warrick presented the decision as an expression of honor, as a decision to fulfil her commitment to [The Registry](#), an upscale version of Kelly Temporary Services that provides what it describes as "expert, ready-to-serve interim leadership for colleges and universities" drawn from the ranks of higher education retirees and otherwise unemployed leaders without portfolios. The Registry, a private firm that affects such institutional trappings as a heraldic shield, advertises that its ready-made kingpins may not become candidates for permanent positions, but it also confesses, much to the alarm of Grambling faculty, that "as evidence of this [Registry] success, in 2012 and 2013, more than half of our Registry Interims were asked to extend their engagement by our college/university clients." Amusingly, The Registry has posted the escutcheon of Grambling University on its web site, thereby commemorating the conveniently dignified exit route it has provided Grambling's beleaguered interim President.

Meanwhile, University of Louisiana System President Sandra Woodley, sensing the eruptive atmosphere on the Grambling campus, issued a long letter to the Grambling community noting that adjustments in the search time schedule should not be over-interpreted, admitting that the search committee would face hurtles as it attempted to convince top candidates to enter so fervently boiling a situation, and affirming that a search firm would enter the scene by way of regularizing the search process. As we go to press, the Monroe newspapers are reporting that President Woodley thinks that the search may conclude near to the date specified in the original time-line, a sure sign that officialdom thinks that the Warrick crisis needs to recede into history.

AT INSTITUTIONS LIKE:



Grambling joins the rogue's
gallery at The Registry

RALLO RALLIES THE ACADEMIC TROOPS AS ALEXANDRIA SUMMIT EXPANDS

Setting a fine precedent for the future of his administration, new Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph C. Rallo visited with faculty leaders from around the state at the February 7th meeting of the Alexandria Summit, the quarterly and highly collegial conclave of the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates. In a no-holds-barred and refreshingly honest presentation, Rallo reviewed the full range of current academic concerns, whether the budget crisis or the emergence of new curricula or the place of workforce development in "the new normal" of the academic enterprise. The genial Rallo, a former Air Force Colonel as well as a spiffily dressed, charmingly and naturally easygoing leader, fielded a barrage of questions and stimulated intense discussion. Time flew by faster than an F-16 on afterburners, with the result that Rallo volunteered to return for a follow-on engagement at the next Alexandria Summit Meeting, slated for May 2nd.

Rallo's presentation was followed by a series of delightful offerings from colleagues around the state. Fresh, young, and enthusiastic, Louisiana Tech faculty leader Michael Swanbom offered up what he styled as a smorgasbord of advocacy, liberty, and governance suggestions. An ensemble of colleagues from the University of New Orleans helped colleagues reconnect with the Crescent City and its distinguished but ailing institutions. Baton Rouge Community College Faculty Leader Barbara Hasek talked about the STEM programs in the two-year institutions. Sonya Hester, from Southern University in Shreveport, opened our eyes with respect to the upcoming March 5th statewide forum in Shreveport (advertised elsewhere in this newsletter). Pratul Ajmera, one of the greatest contributors of all time to faculty governance in Louisiana, shared his reflections on the first year of retirement in the long, ever-lengthening life of a faculty activist and devotee of the life of the mind. John Vanchiere, a leading pediatrician at the LSUHSC—Shreveport research campus, cued us in to the challenges in the life of a medical researcher in a state with perpetual budget and administrative challenges.

Mark your calendars for the next Alexandria Summit Meeting on May 2nd!



A full house at the Alexandria
Summit Meeting



Commissioner of
Higher Education
Joseph C. Rallo



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Lifestyle Feature

LIFESTYLE FEATURE: SIX THIRTY-MINUTE MIDWEEK DISHES

The folks at the “Lifestyle Feature” desk of the *Newsletter* receive more than a few questions about how to find time to pursue a “lifestyle” in the high-demand environment of the modern university. These readers always excel in the admirable art of gratitude; they offer thanks and they energize the often weary *Newsletter* staff; yet they often underestimate what they can accomplish in even those few moments that lie fallow in the day of an overloaded professional.

One of the best ways to begin developing a lifestyle is by cooking sumptuous meals not only when possessing the luxury of uninterrupted discretionary time but also in the middle of the week, even when obligations are at their highest. What discourages most seekers after the ennobled life is the anticipation of long hours spent over the stove-top, hours presumably preceded by even longer intervals spent poring over cookbooks. The salutary as well as salivation-inducing truth is that cookery abounds with quickly executed recipes and that, as celebrity chef and local “figure” John Folse once confided to a *Newsletter* food enthusiast, most restaurants spend no more than five minutes on the preparation of any one main course.

In this edition of the “Lifestyle Feature,” therefore, our *brigade-de-cuisine* would like to recommend a half dozen classic recipes that require almost no preparation, that carry considerable nutritional value, that won’t break the bank or even require a trip to Whole Foods, and that can be confected in thirty minutes or less, assuming at least a minimum level of inventory in the home pantry. Better, these dishes require no recipe. They would be better designated “procedures” insofar as that mastery of these preparations requires only an understanding of the method for producing them. A few of them involve one ready-made product, the quality and caliber of which will largely determine the outcome of the effort (remember, the dish tastes like what you put into it; shabby ingredients yield flabby tastes). In all cases, however, it is the method more than the particular ingredients or their exact ratios that yield the best results.

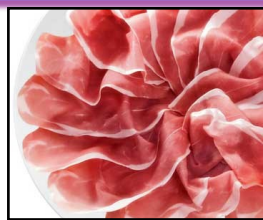
First among these stellar and yet simple dishes is gnocchi (or, in a pinch, any other pasta, although the potato-derived earthiness of gnocchi definitely deserves the nod) in Gorgonzola sauce. Gorgonzola, a mold-infused cheese similar to blue cheese or Roquefort, offers a special unctuous vivacity that, coupled with a reverberant overtone of a taste that recalls a

high-octave chord in a minor key, provides the perfect counterpoint to the rounded, bass flavor of these little potato puffs. With regard to preparation, gnocchi in Gorgonzola cream is simplicity itself. Boil the gnocchi (three minutes maximum) and drain; meanwhile, warm cream, crumbled gorgonzola, chives, salt, pepper or Tabasco, and a little olive oil in a sauce pan. Toss the gnocchi in the seasoned sauce and, presto, dinner is ready!

Italy is often enough the go-to nation for such mind-bogglingly speedy recipes. A non-vegetarian competitor for gnocchi in Gorgonzola sauce is surely that renowned classic, veal saltimbocca. Ready after ten minutes of preparation and no more than five minutes of cooking time, veal saltimbocca can earn a chef that first Michelin star without even a full hour working the line. To prepare a main course for two, all that one needs is a half-dozen very thin veal scallops, a few leaves of sage, a few strips of prosciutto, white wine, flour, butter, and seasonings. Begin by bedecking the veal scallops with prosciutto and one or two leaves of sage, then fold over the layered scallops to make little sandwiches. Dust the veal packets with seasoned flour, drop them into vigorously hot pan that has been anointed with a bit of extra virgin olive oil, and sear off the veal for about two minutes on each side. Quickly deglaze the pan with the wine, swirl in a bit of butter (until thickened), add a dab of stock if a deeper flavor is desired, and serve!

For those looking for a less occidental flavor profile, the high-velocity meal of choice is surely teriyaki chicken. With only the effort required to pick up a bag of pre-cut chicken tenders and a bottle of marinade, even the average snuff-dipper can emerge as a candidate for advancement in the Benihana academy. Take the chicken tenders and marinate them in the Teriyaki sauce (Soy Vay brand, which, amusingly, also happens to be kosher, is a *Newsletter* favorite), then either finish them off on a hot grill or carefully stir fry them in a wok (making certain not to burn or over-caramelize the clinging marinade, which contains an admixture of sugar). Even if the budding cooks makes a side dish of white rice, which requires a fifteen-minute cooking time, the half-hour quota will not be exceeded, yet the pleasures of the plate will persist in memory for, if not eternity, at least a good long while.

—Continued on page 12



JINDAL, LSU-NICHOLLS BUFFER ZONE, AND ALJAZEERA

Academic professionals from the Baton Rouge campuses, from Nicholls State university, and From Southeastern Louisiana University often live in the buffer zone between these campuses—in Livingston, St. James, Ascension, and St. John the Baptist Parish— in pursuit of good public schools, inexpensive but high-quality housing, and the fresh country life. But before rushing into rural bliss, cultured home buyers ought to take a look at Governor Bobby Jindal's latest moment in the media sun, to wit, his appearance in desert-driven new media giant *Aljazeera*, that favorite of those who, even without a camel, have encountered a few bumps in the road of life. A recent *Aljazeera* report uncovers the tortured and tortuous story of a new methanol plant under construction in St. James Parish, much to the chagrin of long-term residents. Behind the construction effort is a regional Chinese Communist Party Secretary who, noting anti-corruption pushes within China, has found it convenient to sluice assets into American industrial projects while repositioning himself on the Gulf coast and who has acquired increasing traction with the man who rules Louisiana higher education. The entire story is available [online](#).



BLACK FACULTY & STAFF CAUCUS BLACK SCHOLARS AWARD CEREMONY 2015 LSU

LSU BLACK FACULTY AND STAFF CAUCUS is accepting nominations for its BLACK SCHOLARS AWARDS CEREMONY 2015. This year's program, to be held on Sunday, March 29, 2015 at the LSU Student Union Theater, recognizes black undergraduate scholars who have achieved academic excellence at LSU.

The Black Scholars Awards Ceremony 2015 will honor over 800 students with overall grade point averages ranging from 3.0 to 4.0. From this elite group, three students are selected to receive a special award, including a one-time cash award and special recognition. The special awards are as follows.

STUDENTS MAY SELF-NOMINATE.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 9, 2015 AT 12 MIDNIGHT.

Charles Harrington Graduate Student Award – Presented to an outstanding graduate student who has made contributions to his/her field or to LSU

[Charles Harrington Graduate Student Award Nomination Form \(LINK\)](#)

Huel D. Perkins Leadership Award – Presented to an undergraduate student with outstanding contributions to the campus and local community

[Huel D. Perkins Leadership Award Nomination Form \(LINK\)](#)

A.P. Tureaud Milestone Award – Presented to a student with any significant first-time achievement

[A.P. Tureaud Milestone Award Nomination Form \(LINK\)](#)

Complete nominations must include all of the following to be considered:

- A completed nomination form
- Supporting documentation: resume, letter of recommendations, references, etc.

ABOUT THE BLACK FACULTY & STAFF CAUCUS: The BFSC serves the special needs of African American employees by promoting understanding of African American concerns and providing assistance, education, and social interaction for the employees. In the past few years, the BFSC has focused on infrastructure, student development, and working with the University in meeting the goals of both the institution and the BFSC. For more information about LSU Black Faculty & Staff Caucus, visit www.lsu.edu/bfsc.

LSU United Forum

with Jim Richardson

Topic: Prioritizing Cuts

Monday, March 9, 2015

3-5 p.m.

International Room 303



--Continued from page 10 (Lifestyle Feature)

Chicken is among the most flexible of fast-prep foods because it seldom requires extended cooking times in order to achieve tenderness. Thus, even those dishes that look as if they have simmered since Methuselah's quinceañera can come to completion in fewer than thirty minutes so long as cooperative chicken provides the principal protein. One dish that always frightens tourists owing to its rich colors and powerful flavor development is chicken paprikash, a dish at the very core of the Hungarian culinary canon. That wonderfully orange-to-mahogany sauce, however, draws its seeming maturity not from long preparation times, but from the dried Hungarian paprika, which has done its aging long before the harried cook arrives in the kitchen. Those in an extreme hurry can buy chicken already cut into conveniently sized chunks (often sold as "stir fry chicken"). Those chunks, once quickly dusted in a flour seasoned with salt, pepper, and thyme, can hop into a hot skillet containing a bit of safflower oil, there to flash-cook in circa five minutes. Once the chicken is tidily browned, all that needs doing is the deglazing of the pan with a bit of dry white wine, the adding in of (ready-made) sour cream, and the dowsing of the pan with liberal loads of paprika, a bit of celery seed, and maybe a dish or two of lemon. Check the seasoning, add salt if need be (and, of



course, confirm that you used genuine Hungarian paprika), and your main course is ready to harmonize with some extracts from Liszt.

Underneath all that beautiful orange-brown sauce is, of course, yet another quick dish: chicken nuggets, the easiest down-home gourmet

meal in the world. Again, grab the chicken chunks; massage them in a bit of buttermilk; dust them in seasoned flour that you have upgraded with your own choice of dried herbs and other aromatics; and sizzle in a skillet (preferably cast-iron) coated with a high-heat-tolerant oil such as peanut oil or sunflower oil. That dish will be on your plate in fifteen minutes—you can take it from Brer Rabbit.



Last among this selection of apparitional dishes is the venerable taco, which can be assembled in as short or as long a time as one pleases. Ultimately, all that a taco contains is a mix of seasoned ground beef and ground pork that has been gussied up by whatever aromatics and sauces that a gourmet might please. Grab that old cast-iron skillet, coat it with a little oil, and throw in a half-pound each of ground pork and ground sirloins. Sizzle these together, cook in some chopped onions (make sure that they begin to caramelize), dust the whole with your favorite chili power, maybe add in some oregano, and pop the results in your favorite taco shell. Nowadays, every market in town has some version of quesadilla cheese, which, if mixed with a bit of cheddar, yields a superb topping, especially when graced with a fine salsa. And more, if you have time! Hint: Try to allocate two minutes to chop in some fresh cilantro, which makes all the difference in the Latin American world!

Those six dishes should get everyone up to Sunday, when more time can be spent on those slow-cooking favorites!



ALEXANDER AAUP SNUB TRIGGERS FACULTY BACKLASH

Newsletter readers have followed for many months the sad story of the five censures AAUP (American Association of University Professors) censures against Louisiana institutions. At five censures statewide, little Louisiana, with less than one-and-one-half percent of American's population and with a university system not even equal to that, has garnered, in the last five years, nearly ten percent of all AAUP censures imposed within the last fifty years. Academic professionals around Louisiana had hoped for the beginning of the end of this infamy owing to an initiative by LSU President King Alexander to negotiate release from the censure list. Alexander's initially ambitious undertaking involved dispatching a delegation to the AAUP Washington office and an assortment of lengthy telephone conversations. Mishaps began emerging in November, when the AAUP offered to release LSU A&M from the censure list early, without a full vote of the AAUP membership, if it would meet certain minimal conditions regarding the working conditions and rules for long-term contingent faculty (faculty who had worked at LSU without prospect of tenure for seven or more years). Alexander, whose former institution, Murray State University, remained under censure for the four years of his presidency on that campus, apparently balked at the granting of due process guarantees to these personnel, who, the AAUP believes, cannot enjoy academic freedom so long as they have reason to fear easy dismissal. The entire initiative came quietly crashing down on January 27th, when Alexander, an expert in the art of publicity, veered from his usual practice of community consultation and quietly informed the AAUP that LSU would make no additional efforts to escape the censure list and that it regarded its academic freedom policies as sufficient. Fortunately for faculty activists but perhaps to the surprise of the LSU System publicity machine, the January 27th letter not only surfaced but triggered an [LSU A&M Faculty Senate resolution](#) calling on President Alexander to resume negotiations with the AAUP; to join or send a designee to join an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee charged with finding a solution to the censure problem; to deal with the public perception, recruitment, and retention problems raised by the censure; and to recognize his own need to learn from and collaborate with the AAUP. A final vote on the resolution is scheduled for March 17th.



UNION BUSTING

101

No due process for
contingent faculty at
LSU

COURAGEOUS FACULTY UPEND BRCC HRM

In one of the most astounding episodes of the new year, colleagues at Baton Rouge Community College, where tenure is unknown and where pay dives deeper than Jacques Cousteau, exposed an administrative power grab and upended HRM (Human Resources Management) all in one short two-day spell. The story opened with the distribution, by BRCC HRM, of an “acknowledgment” form in which HRM officials informed faculty members that they had no say over academic policy (“the Chancellor of BRCC shall have sole authority to add, delete or adopt revisions to BRCC policy”), that prosperity at BRCC would be ephemeral (“employees at BRCC have entered into employment with BRCC voluntarily and for no specified length of time”), and that the Sword of Damocles would always hang over employees’ heads (“BRCC may change, modify, suspend, interpret or cancel, in whole or part, any published or unpublished policy or practice, with or without notice, at its sole discretion, without giving cause or justification”). A follow-on paragraph informed employees that they not must, by signature acknowledge receipt of this communicate but that they must recognize the aforementioned abjection “as a condition of my employment.”

Needless to say, the release of that contract with the devil elicited more than a few catcalls. Yet, in what could surely compete for one of academe’s greatest example of tone-deafness, BRCC HRM released a follow-on memo announcing that the preceding assertion of unlimited administrative authority was “more narrow that intended” and *apologizing* that BRCC HRM has not adequately proclaimed the imperial authority of BRCC officialdom—that BRCC had shorted faculty by not repressing them with the full force and grandeur of the BRCC administration.

The third act of this strange play occurred only a few hours later when, cued by unknown players in the administrative mezzanine, the Director of HRM called BRCC Faculty Senate President Barbara Hasek with an apology—this time, for the correct offenses—and withdrew the entire series of memoranda, declaring the signing of the acknowledgment voluntary. Thus, faculty action staved off one of the most complete and categorical administrative power grabs in Louisiana higher education history.



BRCC Faculty Senate
President Barbara Hasek

TIP OF THE MONTH

How rare it is that extrapolation exceeds origin, yet that is exactly what has happened at [NoJa](#), which has emerged as the number-one dining option in Mobile, Alabama. *Newsletter* readers who happen to be cruising I-10 in an easterly direction or who have business in Alabama’s leading port city should consider visiting this takeoff on Emeril Lagasse’s famous NOLA. And takeoff is the word: Chef-Patron Chakli Diggs has not only created a dining environment and culinary pathway that honors New Orleanian food pioneer “Emeril” but that also soars into new heights, whether through the intensely decorated, multi-level combined industrial chic and French bistro dining room or through an internationally aware cuisine that awakens, enlivens, and energizes both Crescent City classics and exploratory dishes from the intergalactic reaches of the gustatory imagination. Mixology also reaches new heights as Diggs’s beverage chefs explore extracts across the spectrum, from the warm pear to the breezy citrus to the monastic herbal cabinet. A dining experience not to be missed!



PRESIDENTIAL PUBLIC RECORDS CASE HEADS TO LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT

A new battle is looming in the attempt to force the LSU Board of Supervisors to comply with the public records law by releasing the names of the applicants in the candidate pool for the 2013 search for an LSU System President. Two regional newspapers, *The Advocate* and *The Times Picayune*, have asked the Louisiana Supreme Court to review the decision of an appeals panel that limited the release of names to those four persons who characterized themselves not as prospects but as applicants—a bizarre criterion that, *de facto*, allows the candidate to decide whether or no he or she is covered by public records rules (insofar as asserting that one is not an applicants but only a member of a “wish list” can excuse one from discovery).



MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

Calvary (John Michael McDonagh, 2014)

—Reviewed by Carl Freedman (2014)

It is a commonplace that much of the world's poetry, painting, and architecture—and a good deal of its music—is devoted to religious themes. But the same is much less true of the newer aesthetic forms. The novel is fundamentally, though not entirely, a secular genre, and cinema is perhaps even more so. There are exceptions, of course: the films of Robert Bresson in French and of Andrei Tarkovsky in Russian offer outstanding examples of cinema that wrestles with religious issues in serious and complex ways. But such achievements are rare in English-language film, and are least of all to be found in Hollywood, where religion—when visible at all—is usually reduced to a slick, unthreatening religiosity. Classic examples include Norman Taurog's *Boys Town* (1938), in which Spencer Tracy gives an iconic (and Oscar-winning) performance as the endlessly benevolent Father Flanagan, and Leo McCarey's *Going My Way* (1944), in which Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald (both in Oscar-winning roles) play a pair of Catholic priests who serve up roughly equal helpings of comedy and pathos. Whatever the merits of such movies, theological sophistication is not among them.

If there is anywhere in the Anglosphere in which seriously religious films might reasonably be sought, it is Ireland: until recently one of the most fervently Catholic nations in Europe and for well over a century a place that has produced a share of the world's great cultural achievements massively out of all proportion to the country's size and economic power. Cinema has in recent years become especially prominent among the aesthetic forms in which the Irish excel; and no Irish director of his generation seems to me more promising than John Michael McDonagh. Though born (in 1967) and raised in London, McDonagh counts as Irish because of his Irish parentage and because his work is dominated by Irish concerns (his brother, Martin McDonagh, is generally considered one of Ireland's most important living playwrights and is also a filmmaker himself, most notably of the brilliant 2008 dark comedy *In Bruges*). John McDonagh's debut feature as both screenwriter and director was *The Guard* (2011), which might be considered an Irish parody and critique of the American police procedural. It stars Brendan Gleeson as a smart, well-meaning, hard-drinking Irish policeman with sometimes unorthodox law-enforcement methods ("guard" is an Irish term for a police officer). Circumstances force the guard to team up with an earnest, strait-laced American FBI agent (played by Don Cheadle) in order to combat an international drug-smuggling operation. The film takes one unexpected turn after another, and manages to combine hilarity with horror in a quintessentially Irish way: think of Samuel Beckett, one of the supreme masters of this particular combination, who seems to me in many ways McDonagh's chief precursor.

Beckett's influence is even more in evidence in *Calvary*, which, fine as *The Guard* is, makes a significant advance over the earlier film. Once again McDonagh serves as his own screenwriter, and once again Brendan Gleeson stars. (Gleeson also dominates *In Bruges*, and seems to be forming with the McDonagh brothers one of the great actor-director partnerships, comparable to that between John Wayne and John Ford, or between Robert De

Niro and Martin Scorsese, or that which Michael Fassbender is currently establishing with Steve McQueen.) Gleeson again plays a good-hearted Irishman devoted to serving his neighbors in frequently unconventional ways; there is something about Gleeson that just oozes beneficence (even in *In Bruges*, where he plays a professional contract murderer). But here he is a priest—one Father James—rather than a policeman. Father James officiates at a small church in a small town in County Sligo, located on the edge of Ireland's ruggedly beautiful western coast. His parishioners are a quirky lot, though perhaps no more so than the human race in general.

As the film opens, Father James is in the confessional, talking with a parishioner whose voice he recognizes. The man on the other side of the booth tells Father James that he was violently raped by a priest at the age of seven—and that the abuse continued, every other day, for five years (one wonders, in passing, what the reaction today would be to a modern Father Flanagan who announced his intention to live in the rural Nebraska countryside in the company of hundreds of young boys). Now the man wants revenge. But the rapist priest is dead, and so beyond anything that mortal men could do to him. Besides, there would be no real point—or so the extremely impenitent penitent reasons—in killing such a clearly evil priest. Genuine revenge against the Church can be gained, instead, by killing a *good* priest, a priest innocent of any wrongdoing: in fact, by killing Father James himself. The man gives Father James a week to get his affairs in order, but promises to meet him the following Sunday and to shoot him dead.

The idea of murdering Father James precisely because of his goodness may seem crazy; and yet a rigorously orthodox theological dialectic is implicitly at work here. As a Christian, Father James is commanded to imitate Christ, and as a priest he is meant to represent Christ to the laity: and now he is being put in exactly the position of Christ on the hill of Calvary (hence the film's title). For Christ, of course, was also an innocent, the Lamb of God, condemned to die because of evil that was done by others: evil whose ultimate source lay in the Original Sin with which humanity has been cursed since the successful Satanic temptation in Eden. The man promising to kill Father James is not, then, for all his hatred of the Catholic Church, really challenging the Catholic and Christian scheme of things. He is rather offering to play the role of Satan within that scheme.

Though understandably a bit disconcerted by the threat to his life, Father James does not, in fact, spend much time during the following week worrying about it. Instead, he goes about his business pretty much as usual, tending conscientiously to the needs of his flock. The people around him are, for the most part, a pretty forbidding and in some cases at least vaguely—or even not so vaguely—maleficent bunch. They include a prissy, hypocritical curate, Father James's assistant, and a pompous, time-serving bishop, Father James's superior in the Church hierarchy.



—Continued on page 17

Capitol Park Walking Tour



9 a.m. Saturday, Mar. 14

The Capitol Park Walking Tour will provide a brief history of

- Home site of war hero and President, Zachary Taylor
- Fort San Carlos
- Pentagon Barracks, LSU's first Baton Rouge campus
- Capitol Annex
- State Capitol
- Arsenal Museum
- Garrison Cemetery

Tours begin at 9 a.m. from the Capitol Park Museum lobby. Attendance is limited to the first 25 guests. Reservations are recommended. Patrons are advised to dress comfortably. During inclement weather, walks will be moved indoors for an informative talk including modern and historic images. Tours are free and generally last 60 to 90 minutes.

CAPITOL PARK MUSEUM



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LUNCHTIME LAGNIAPPE

*Time Will Tell: What We Can Learn about the Civil War
from Modern Conflicts*



Street fighting in Fredericksburg, VA, December 1862

**Noon Wednesday, Mar. 11
Capitol Park Museum**

Aaron Sheehan-Dean, LSU History Department's Fred C. Frey Professor in Southern Studies, will present the laws of war in American history, aspects of the Civil War and later conflicts.

Attendees are encouraged to bring lunch and may come and go as their schedules require.

CAPITOL PARK MUSEUM



A LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM

LOUISIANA
Pick your Passion

If you are planning an event, Capitol Park Museum is a great venue. Just click on the [link](#) to see the many options available.

LSUUnited

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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
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WILDER: DIGITIZE REVEILLE!

Fledgling LSU Libraries Dean Stanley Wilder has embarked on a heroic journey that will never end. Calling for the creation of a digital copy of Louisiana's longest-running student newspaper, the *LSU Reveille*, Wilder, in an admirable move toward decentralized fundraising, has proclaimed a search for a donor willing to support the estimated \$100K project. That project will "never end" because the *Reveille* will presumably continue until eternity itself puts up the "retired—gone fishin'" sign and because a digital record bodes fair to extend the life span of the extant *Reveille* archive well beyond the day when the cows come home. In continuous publication for one-hundred eighteen years, the *Reveille* affords a nonstop review of student life in modern times. Unfortunately, its highly acidic paper stock will soon corrode that valuable print record. In other eternity-related developments, Dean Wilder has announced the selection of a new University archivist, Aaron Richardson, and also reports the acquisition of the papers of renowned political commentator and *The Last Hayride* author John Maginnis.



LSU SALARY SPIGOT OPEN WIDER THAN EVER

One of the oldest idioms in the English language holds that "murder will out," meaning not only that grievous crimes, but secrets of any kind, will eventually become public knowledge. In recent months, the LSU Board of Supervisors has attempted to conceal salary inequities by raising the threshold at which supervisor approval is required for an increase in compensation, thereby concealing many but not all salary increments, presumably in order to conceal the inequities that the *Newsletter* and other media outlets routinely discover. Despite efforts to thicken the rug under which economic skullduggery is swept, revelations of extravagant compensation in the midst of budget cuts continue. At the Ag Center, for example, the consolidation of Agriculture with "One LSU" has provided an occasion to institutionalize what had, for many years, been a laughable bit of extra compensation. The \$12,000.00 annual car allowance and the \$25,000.00 annual housing allowance paid to the Ag Center Chancellor have now been converted to regular, permanent salary for the new multi-titled "Vice President of Agriculture and Dean of the College of Agriculture and Chancellor of the LSU Agricultural Center." Presumably that combined \$37,000.00 that was apparently used either to prevent or perhaps to allow the former Chancellor to live temporarily in a car—doubtless, a biofuel-powered country-camper van—can now be amortized into more stable digs and more reliable wheels. Meanwhile, despite the fiction that the Athletic Department "gives" its extra revenues to the academic side of the University, raises totaling \$75,000.00 and averaging seven percent were handed out to three assistant football coaches, while walloping new contracts totaling \$1,450,000.00 per annum were delivered to two coaches who have risen slightly higher up in the Tiger Stadium pecking order at Tiger Stadium—all to ensure that LSU students remain proficient at the important science of carrying a leather balloon through human traffic.



HAZMAT BARGE-IN RANKLES RED-STICK ACADEME

The kudzu-covered halls of south Louisiana academe prepared to fight back against the political equivalent of herbicide when the lower echelon of the Jindal administration gave the go-ahead to a [Tubal-Cain Marine Service](#) barge "cleaning" plant that would be situated on the Mississippi river embankment immediately south of Baton Rouge. The below-the-radar move was first noticed by the below-the-river residents of swanky Riverbend, an LSU-proximate subdivision inhabited by the most affluent among academic citizens, whether from LSU A&M, Southern, or Baton Rouge Community College. Tubal-Cain, for its part, at least avoids the pretense of hypocrisy, proudly including in its [photo gallery](#) images such as a pipe cover sporting a "keep out" logo and warning against unspecified dangers. Engineers, chemists, and other lovers (and haters) of hazardous materials banded together to mobilize faculty as well as to promote community resistance to a plant that will feature a ferocious twenty-four hour flare (for the burning of miscellaneous hazardous material); a nonstop stream of trucks carting away hazardous materials; a warehouse of hazardous cleaning substances; and a documented probability of a hazardous waste accident. Activists discovered that most of LSU, including legendary Tiger Stadium (with its 100,000 occasional visitors), rested within four miles of the plant and of a potential disaster scenario. The LSU A&M Faculty Senate has responded to the fiasco by passing, on February 24th, a resolution calling for an on-campus public forum hosted by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). LSU A&M Faculty Senate members are also calling on LSU System President King Alexander to join the call for the public forum, noting that the presence of so formidable a hazard near to campus impairs both student and faculty recruitment.



The January issue of the *Newsletter* reported on the excellent vendor fair at LSU, where participants in the GeauxShop purchasing system, a happy result of the LaGrad Act autonomies garnered by LSU, could display their wares for faculty and staff members, all by way of encouraging purchases. One under-reported aspect of the fair was the door prize raffle, in which vendors offered sample items to those whose lucky names popped out of the good old hat. Employees in the LSU A&M Marketing and Mathematics Departments bagged a climate control; a footrest; and a medium-duty paper shredder. May they kick back, relax, and begin grinding up exposed trade secrets!



—Continued from page 15 (Monthly Movie Review)

There is an insufferably arrogant financier, the richest man in the vicinity, who managed to keep his fortune after the crash of 2008 but whose wife and children have left him and who may be facing criminal indictments. There is, most sensationally, an imprisoned serial killer and cannibal, one of Father James's former pupils. The parish also contains an auto mechanic who has immigrated to Ireland from the Ivory Coast and who is having an affair with—and physically battering—a local housewife; a militantly atheistic doctor who is *also* having an affair with the housewife, while sharing with her his medical supply of cocaine; the housewife herself, who uses her striking good looks and sexy clothes to make half-hearted (and entirely unsuccessful) attempts at seducing Father James; and the housewife's husband, a butcher by trade whose occupation seems exquisitely well chosen. Interestingly, the more amiable, sympathetic people with whom we see Father James interacting tend to be foreigners of one sort or another: a relatively young French widow whose husband has just been killed in a car crash while the couple were motoring around Ireland, and who turns to Father James for spiritual comfort; an affable expatriate American novelist, Father James's particular friend, who, old and in ill health, hopes to be able to shoot himself before declining too badly; and, most interesting of all, Father James's daughter, who comes from her home in London to pay a visit after an unsuccessful suicide attempt (Father James was married earlier in life and entered the priesthood only after his wife died). Father James is painfully aware of the limits on his ability to help these people—most of whom actively resist attempts to help them—but, on the whole, he does the best he can.

Father James's job is, then, a difficult one. It carries extremely meager material rewards (as we see from Father James's tiny spartan bedroom in the parish house where he lives), and its ultimate (earthly) reward may well be martyrdom. But it is not, at least from his own viewpoint, a hopeless job. Against much cynicism, Father James keeps insisting, in both word and deed, that every human life is precious, every soul sacred. His implicit motto seems to be the quotation from Saint Augustine that McDonagh chooses as the film's epigraph: "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned." Again, this is strict Christian orthodoxy: salvation is a possibility for every soul but a certainty for none.

But is such orthodoxy to be taken as the movie's own point of view? The film certainly acknowledges that there is much to be said on the other side. The atheist doctor is horribly persuasive when he tells Father James of a hideous medical accident that caused a young child to awake from surgery blind, deaf, and paralyzed—and, presumably, in a state of such unending terror as can scarcely be imagined. The implied conclusion—that such a thing could not possibly take place in a universe ruled by an omnipotent and benevolent deity—is too obvious to need stating. Then too, Father James cannot deny that a local pubkeeper, whose establishment is about to be repossessed, has a point when he rails against

the Church for failing to condemn the sins of the bankers and politicians who looted the country and in 2008 left the ordinary Irish people to pay the bill. The film's opening scene guarantees that we never forget the scandal of clerical child abuse that destroyed so much Catholic faith in this traditionally Catholic country. When arson reduces Father James's church to burnt ruins, and the good father comments that this was obviously the work of someone with a grudge against the Church, a police detective replies that that description fits half of Ireland; and the detective goes on to muse that someday fairly soon Christianity may seem a weird and implausible fable, with young Irish people astounded to learn that such a thing was ever actually believed. McDonagh's characters, like Beckett's, often seem to be moving in a universe that has a gigantic God-shaped hole in it. Indeed, I think that McDonagh, like most Irish artists for the better part of a century, also owes something to James Joyce, Beckett's own personal and professional mentor and the greatest of all Catholic atheists, and something to Franz Kafka, another of Beckett's precursors and the greatest of all Jewish atheists. Atheism is certainly on the agenda for *Calvary*.

Against atheism the film can set only the faith of Father James—and, behind him, that of Jesus Christ on the cross. No character in the movie is more acutely aware of evil, including evil within the Church itself, than Father James. In the film's most emotionally affecting scene, he comes upon his beloved pet dog—his dearest and, indeed, his only real companion—with its throat slashed. He assumes that this terrible cruelty was (like the church arson) the work of the man planning to kill him. At the end, however, he learns that this was not the case; even the man eager to kill a blameless priest draws the line at slaughtering a dog. This can only mean, then, that somebody *else*—presumably someone among the shady characters we have already met—is responsible for this additional, and wildly gratuitous, act of evil. The financier? The auto mechanic? The housewife? We never learn, but Father James's faith in God and in an ultimately benign moral order to the universe never wavers.

Of course, Father James's faith cannot possibly *prove* that any objective reality lies behind it. But then, if a thing can be proved to a mathematical certainty, faith itself becomes a meaningless concept; no one professes "faith" in the multiplication tables. It is in this fine balance between belief and atheism that the most enduring fascination of *Calvary* lies.

Postscript: The foregoing lines are dedicated to the memory of my late friend, Alumni Professor John R. "Jack" May, who during one period of his life was a Jesuit priest and who later, having left the priesthood but not the Church, offered me my first tenure-track job in his capacity as chair of the LSU English Department. Among many other achievements, Jack was one of the founders of film studies at LSU and a nationally eminent scholar of the relation between religion and cinema. He and I often discussed theology, and I have hopes he would have enjoyed this review.