

2-2016

## Faculty Senate Newsletter, February 2016

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/senate-pubs>

---

### Recommended Citation

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, "Faculty Senate Newsletter, February 2016" (2016). *Newsletter*. Paper 47.  
<http://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/senate-pubs/47>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Senate at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsletter by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gcoste1@lsu.edu](mailto:gcoste1@lsu.edu).



# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## President's Column

This season of political campaigns, in which every candidate tries to be universally nice to everyone while also mounting a universal attack against all enemies, brings to mind the strange link between niceness and authoritarianism. In Louisiana, a state with a royalist heritage (whether the French or the Spanish monarchies) and a state in which a preoccupation with etiquette and sociability blunts the painful recognition of a long history of disappointments, losses, failures, exclusions, and disasters, the linkage between sugary sweetness and acidic repression affects almost everything, whether the reluctance to speak out against social ills such as habitual littering or the replacement of academic authority with the caprices of authoritarian administrators. The recent faculty dismissal case at LSU, which centered on a confrontation between a user of impolite language and a nervous administration that had not yet escaped the taint of its installation through an illegitimate search, underlines the association between good manners and absolutist governance.

One lamentable aspect of the manners-manhandling dialectic is the polite perpetuation of assorted counter-productive cultural myths, myths that tend to justify inadequate performance and to block efforts at improvement. A review of tourist literature emerging from the Lieutenant Governor's office and similar tourist bureaus will reveal numerous instances of the trumping of truth by polite genuflections. Louisiana culture is declared "unique" without noting that every state makes such an assertion—that nothing is less unique than claiming to be unique; Louisiana people are credited with the love of family and with friendliness without admitting that they are also clannish, cliquish, and exclusionary with regard to outside influences; Louisiana cuisine is hailed without noting that its last great heyday occurred during the 1980s halcyon days of Paul Prudhomme and that waiters and waitresses in Louisiana restaurants are usually ill-trained, well-meaning but clumsy (and underpaid) college students; road maps show an array of wondrous attractions without mentioning that, owing to poor public hygiene, the biggest adventure (especially in a university) is a visit to a public restroom.

Louisiana academe has more than its share of polite myths that, in the absence of seemingly impolite criticism, perpetuate a toxic mixture of niceness, dictatorship, and incompetence. In a desperate attempt to pump up enrollment numbers during a period of declining college-age populations, Louisiana universities have insulated an assortment of "student-centered" offerings from public criticism (who dares to ask whether the student success centers on every campus, staffed as they are by nice and usually competent people, merely mask the failure of the public education system and allow tyrannical legislators to keep doing what they have always done?). Who has the courage to hurt feelings by lamenting the lack of critical thinking in student newspapers?

Which administrator will expose the charlatan tendencies of an authoritarian Louisiana family dynasty that, on one higher education management board, is represented by a Supervisor who runs a chain of chiropractic clinics? This problem reaches the core of academic leadership. For decades, top-level administrators at campuses throughout Louisiana have dodged bold criticism of political figures for fear that perceived impoliteness will trigger sanctions (or even dismissal).

Sir Francis Bacon reminds us, in his famous essay, that truth is elusive. Whatever truth might be, it is nevertheless universally acknowledged to be a tough taskmaster. Truth seldom comes appareled in the robes of politeness. It is time for higher education leaders to show their fangs and to bite back against those hostile to higher education rather than hide those sharp little canines behind the perpetual smile of a job candidate.



Kevin Cope

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Column .....	1
Higher Education Headliner .....	2
SACSOC Letter Reveals Accreditation Threat, Run a University Like a Business?, Peacock Pens Bill to Allow Readmission into Defined-Benefit Plan, Howard, LSUA Score big Enrollment, Credit Gains .....	3
A.G.'s Corner, Bookstore Committee to be Re-flagged, Capitol Park Museum Events Advertisement .....	4
Delgado States the Case for Funding, Dayne Sherman Issues New column, Colonel Boyd Experienced Fiscal Crises, Too, Frugality Costs: Student Union Pipe Blowout, AAUP Advertisement .....	5
Alexandria Summit Draws Big Turnout, Showcases Commiserating Commissioner, Grambling Votes No Confidence in Larkin, Pumps Out Critical Resolutions .....	6
Lifestyle Feature .....	7
Lifestyle Feature con't, Capitol Park Thirsty Thursday Advertisement .....	8
LSU Supervisors to Blow \$200K Erecting Brazen Idol, Former LSU Chancellor Swept into Post-Retirement Earnings Flap, LSUUnited Advertisement .....	9
Investigative Report Compares Athletic Subsidies, Faculty Cuts, LSU Graduate School Responds to Resuscitation, BRAC, Koubek, Faculty Senate Open Dialogue, LaCarte Transactions to Pass through Workday .....	10
Demonstrations Proliferate, Remind of Need for Coordination, LOUIS Network Launches Open Access Project, LSU OAA Harnessing Innovation Stream, Lombardi Omission Was Reported in July .....	11
Veterinary School Advertisement .....	12
Monthly Movie Review .....	13
Third-Generation Financial Wellness Seminar coming to LSU A&M, Professorial Action Leads to Upgrade for LSUHSC-S Interim Chancellor, Alexander Upgrades Communication Skills, Under-Appreciated Louisiana Leaders Strike Jackpot Elsewhere, Supervisor Contract Benedict Arnold Syndrome .....	14
.Pennington consultants Prescribe Ageism, Tip of the Month: Amber-Bath Salvation Cream, <i>The Economist</i> Studies Buchanan Firing, Hails Free Speech Resolution, Vlosky Digs AG Accomplishments, Too Many Colleges? Not So, Cries New Blogger .....	15
Monthly Movie Review con't, Commissioner on the Roll Again, Laine Letter Reveals Diversion of Fringe Money from Retirement Accounts .....	16

# Higher Education Headliner



Dan Layzell

A native of colder climes—namely the outskirts of Springfield, Illinois—Vice President for Finance and Administration & CFO, Dan Layzell, came to Louisiana State University as a seasoned professional. At LSU, Layzell has an opportunity to work across departments (e.g. Human Resources, Information Technology, Budget and Planning, Institutional Research, etc.) and use the skills that he garnered while working at other universities for the betterment of LSU. With the late budgetary woes emanating from the state capitol building a few miles from his office in Thomas Boyd Hall, Layzell, as a chief financial decision-maker, would have as much right as anyone to be wary, or even pessimistic, regarding the future of Louisiana's flagship university. But in fact, it would be hard to imagine a more enthusiastic advocate for LSU's future.

Among things to be optimistic about, Layzell, a father of three, points towards the Provost's revised Flagship 20/20 university plan as a positive indicator of LSU's continuing growth and evolution. Layzell remarks, "We have made strides over the past several years towards becoming a truly national university. I would like to see more of that. More research activity. We can't be everything to everybody, but I think the new plan will be a step in the right direction." In particular, Layzell sees his job as supporting the academic mission of the university. In order to support the staff and faculty in carrying out this mission, he finds ways to make use of the very limited resources available. As a man who understands the limitations of finances, he is very pleased about the revisions of Flagship 20/20, as these make the goals more realistic.

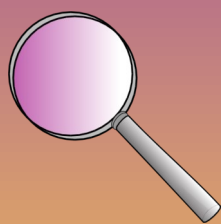
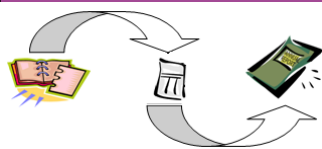
Layzell also mentions the new IT system, Workday, as a positive step forward. He feels that it will streamline some of the

unwieldy elements of the current system, removing many of the manual processes. The automation of so much, he hopes, will allow people to focus more on the actual business of the institution, as opposed to "moving paper from one system to another." Layzell does recognize that such a move presents a challenge and a cultural change, but he believes it will be a positive change. He confidently comments, "It will bring a lot of changes, but they will be changes for the better."

Layzell, though, does realize that there are some very serious hurdles to overcome in the future. He points out that those working in higher education must constantly demonstrate the value of higher education, especially its role in business growth and in the life and culture of the state. As the flagship school of the LSU system, LSU A & M is in a unique position to lead the state into a better future and prove the importance of a solid, well-respected, and nationally recognized higher education system. Part of that is gaining recognition for Nobel Prize winners, as well as Heisman Trophy winners.

As he describes the future of LSU, his confidence is invigorating, and it is clear that Layzell has adapted well to the warmer climate. He loves the food and the people of his adoptive state. Of LSU, he speaks about how impressed he is at the level of commitment to and the passion for the university. He had not seen that at any university he had visited, and this was one of the many factors that led this third-generation graduate of the University of Illinois to don the purple and gold. Layzell's ultimate goal is to leave LSU better off than he found it. In the current academic climate, that is, indeed, a worthy goal.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman





## SACSCOC LETTER REVEALS ACCREDITATION THREAT

Belle Wheelan, the irrepressible President of accrediting agency SACSCOC and LSU alumna, has rocked the Louisiana higher education establishment by firing off a [letter](#) to Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne and assorted other top politicians in which she lays out the consequences of continued funding instability in the Louisiana higher education. According to Wheelan, Louisiana universities are in danger of violating SACSCOC accreditation principle 2.11.1, which requires that institutions demonstrate financial stability adequate to the support of their mission. Wheelan warns that continued vacillations in the higher education funding pool may lead to sanctions by SACSCOC and may even result in withdrawal of accreditation (and, with that, ineligibility to receive federal funds and likewise ineligibility to participate in varsity sports, including football). Despite its firm tone, Wheelan's letter was welcomed by faculty leaders insofar as it sent a clear and unambiguous signal to Louisiana politicians that irresponsible behavior carries major consequences and that Louisiana universities really do play on a national stage. Research has failed to turn up any evidence of any other major state university system that has been threatened with cancellation of accreditation, out of the usual review cycle, owing to public penury.



Belle Wheelan warns of de-accreditation

## RUN A UNIVERSITY LIKE A BUSINESS?

One of the favorite nostrums of the anti-tax factions is the claim that a university ought to be run like a business. Whatever the merits of this prescriptive analogy, evidence for great success in the business community remains sporadic. Consider the case of sandwich magnate and Board of Regents member Marty Chabert, who attempted to exploit the university economy by opening a branch of his poboyn chain in the environs of LSU A&M. In but a few months, Chabert's flagship "Marty J's Poboy's" had gone bust, its logo having been stripped from its building while the background LSU colors blazed on, thus contrasting public with private financial models. If business is to be the model for higher education, perhaps businessmen who also fancy themselves educational leaders should attempt to remain solvent for longer than one football recruiting cycle.



Don't run academe like a business--Board of Regents member Marty Chabert's business goes kaput in only a few months

## PEACOCK PENS BILL TO ALLOW READMISSION INTO DEFINED-BENEFIT PLAN



Senator Barrow Peacock

The problems with Louisiana's retirement plans for academic professionals are legion, but surely one of the most salient is the irrevocability of decisions to enter the defined contribution plan, or "ORP" (Optional Retirement Plan). Since 1992, those who might have rethought their decision to join the ORP have been barred from reentry into the defined-contribution plan, the legacy scheme colloquially if somewhat inaccurately known by the acronym of its management organization, TRSL (Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana). Now Senator Barrow Peacock of Bossier City has introduced a measure, [Senate Bill 17](#), that would void the irrevocability rule and would allow any employee in higher education to reenter the defined-benefit plan effective February 1, 2017. Senator Peacock's measure differs from earlier attempts to allow reentry into the legacy pension plan in that it does not authorize purchase of service time, nor does it require surrender of accrued assets. Wonderfully simple, SB17 straightforwardly allows employees to enter the plan and begin accruing time from the aforementioned effective date.

If passed, SB17 may benefit a subset of employees who wish to add a steady stream of income to the resources provided by their ORP accounts. Careful analysis would be required to ascertain whether a faculty member with many years of service would or would not benefit from such a decision. While Senator Peacock's bill is not a panacea, it shows both good will and an intention to improve retirement prospects for long-laboring scholars, for which effort he deserves thanks.

## HOWARD, LSUA SCORE BIG ENROLLMENT, CREDIT GAINS

Participants in faculty governance around the state have a special place in their hearts for LSU of Alexandria, the home base of the renowned Alexandria Summit Meetings. It is thus a great source of pleasure and delight to note that LSUA Chancellor Dan Howard and his team have scored another big increase in enrollment at a school that, only a few years ago, politicians were preparing to merge with other institutions. For the spring 2016 semester, LSUA enrollment soared 13.37% while student credit hours zoomed up 14%. Tuition revenue surged by nearly \$700,000.00; transfer student enrollment tidal-waved up a whopping 38%; and minority student enrollment hit a new high of 887. It looks as if a new golden age is underway at LSUA; let's hope that central-office LSU officials allow the productive faculty a well-deserved pay raise!





## 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.

**A.G. is on sabbatical, and we hope to welcome him back for the March addition.**

### BOOKSTORE COMMITTEE TO BE RE-FLAGGED

Ever since its outsourcing to private provider Barnes and Noble, the LSU Bookstore has been a bone of contention among faculty and neighborhood intellectuals. Disappointed that the bookstore offers far more T-shirts than tomes, campus and community savants have caviled at a facility that seems seldom to serve its alleged academic purpose. Tensions were eased, in recent years, by the creation of a Bookstore Committee, which engaged in vigorous face-to-face discussions with Bookstore management as well as assorted stakeholders. Recognizing that much of the chagrin arose from a perceived conflict between the characterization of the shop as a bookstore and the rather more various mission that it seemed to serve, Auxiliary Services leader and indefatigable innovator Margot Carroll agreed to re-flag the Bookstore Committee, perhaps designating it, temporarily, the "Community Store Committee." The goal: to figure out what kind of store is both desirable and practicable for the premium location on Highland Road.



Committee reforms may lead to new mission for bookstore

## CAPITOL PARK MUSEUM EVENTS

### Lunchtime Lagniappe

#### Louisiana Swamps and Marshes: Easy Access Hikes and Drives

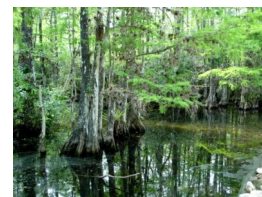
March 9

12 p.m. – 1 p.m.

Anne Butler and Henry Cancienne have collaborated to produce *Louisiana Swamps and Marshes: Easy Access Hikes and Drives*, a beautiful guide to Louisiana's wonderful wetlands, coastal marshes and swamps.

Cancienne will show photographs of some of his favorite walking trails and drives, most free and easily accessible via raised boardwalks and well-maintained paths. His photographs have appeared in 21 books and numerous magazines and have been exhibited in libraries, national parks and plantation homes throughout Louisiana.

Anne Butler will present her writing from the guide. She is the author of twenty books and hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles. Her passion is the preservation in print of Louisiana's unique history and culture.



### First Saturday Event Spanish Town Walking Tour

April 2

9:00 a.m.

Join museum staff on an architecture and history tour of the Spanish Town neighborhood.



Patrons are advised to dress comfortably. In the event of inclement weather, walks will be moved to the museum multipurpose room for an informative talk that will include a slide show with modern and historic images from the neighborhood. Tours generally last 60 to 90 minutes. All walking tours are free and leave from the museum lobby.

# No Funds, No Future

Delgado flyer states the case

Advocates for better funding of higher education often find themselves short of specific talking points. Exasperation over the not-so-big picture of higher education finance vents the energy required for detailed research in policy matters. An unidentified ensemble of interpreters at Delgado Community College has come to the rescue of the well-meaning but under-informed by preparing a flyer containing an assortment of useful, concisely expressed information concerning the consequences of decreased funding for colleges and universities. Available online, the Delgado [No Funds, No Future](#) document includes a summary of the impact to date of funding cuts; a projection of the future adverse effects of diminished funding; and a list of legislators whom citizens may petition.

Veteran columnist, activist, blogger, and Southeastern Louisiana University faculty activist Dayne Sherman has once again sounded the clarion call by issuing a spritely [new column](#) on the controversy over the TOPS financial assistance program. Wondering why impatient citizens are already blaming the new governor for TOPS funding instability, Sherman explains the genesis of TOPS's problems with respect to the structure of Louisiana budget practices and calls for a revamping of legislative leadership.



Columnist Dayne Sherman

## COLONEL BOYD EXPERIENCED FISCAL CRISES, TOO

The *Newsletter* flourishes in large measure owing to community, crowd-sourced journalism. More than a few story tips pass over the transom during our typically not-so-typical news cycles. The most recent fruitful lead emanated from the very Deep South. Informants advised the newsletter that Thibodaux's *Daily Comet* had plunged into the deep history of higher education and had discovered a long historical record of severe economic shortages more than rivaling those of our time. Early LSU President Colonel David Boyd, it seems, endured rigors worthy of a medieval ascetic saint. We learn that a certain "Professor" had gone three years without the purchase of any new clothing, leaving him threadbare (doubtless, the LSU System would dismiss him for obscenity in the classroom!); August 6, 1874 marks a special low spot at which the underpaid administrator fears starvation. The grimly amusing story is available [online](#).



LSU President  
Colonel David  
Boyd faced tough  
budget decisions

# JOIN THE:



Support academic freedom and protect the dignity of academic effort!

<http://www.aaup.org/>



## FRUGALITY COSTS: STUDENT UNION PIPE BLOWOUT

Those who continue to believe that it is easy to do more with less should take note of the recent mishap at the LSU Student Union, where erupting pipes hobbled the entire building and shut down one of LSU's major auxiliary revenue sources for a day plus a few hours. Surely the cost of providing repairs for public buildings falls short of the cost of major cleanup operations and of lost revenue at a campus economic center. Of course, there is the possibility that the LSU Student is attempting to cleanse itself of the nutritionally damaging junk food outlets that are now its core business!





## ALEXANDRIA SUMMIT DRAWS BIG TURNOUT, SHOWCASES COMMISERATING COMMISSIONER

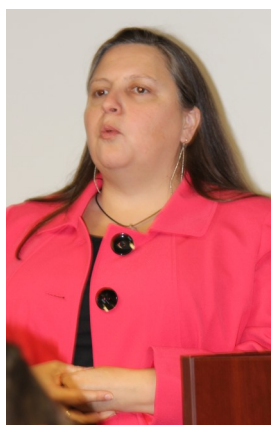
The Valentine month of February saw the emergence of a revived relationship between faculty and state-level administration as Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph C. Rallo engaged in a vigorous heart-to-heart conversation with conferees at the Alexandria Summit Meeting, the quarterly gathering of the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates on the campus of LSU of Alexandria. The Commissioner, who has handily outdone all his predecessors when it comes to dialoguing with faculty, took a new and evolutionary tone as he commiserated with conferees concerning the ravages of reduced funding. During the first days of his administration the Commissioner had, perhaps wisely, carefully avoided too intense a critique of the industrial view of higher education: the view that workforce development should be the *ne plus ultra* of higher education. During the Alexandria event, Commissioner Rallo impressed attendees with his no-holds-barred analysis of the effects of funding cuts. The Commissioner evidenced his usual robust, as well as buoyant, style when savoring the full menu of questions that academic professionals can serve.

In addition to the Commissioner's presentation, conferees enjoyed plentiful offerings from the experts among their colleagues. Ramona Olvera from South Louisiana Community College detailed the curious, sometimes synergistic and sometimes painful, interplay of the workforce mandate with the traditions of higher education. From Olivier Moreteau and Dominique Homberger of Louisiana State University, colleagues learned about the major differences in the management, policy, and working conditions of American and European universities. University of Louisiana Lafayette faculty leader Leslie Bary solicited collegial assistance in reactivating the statewide Faculty Advisory Council of the University of Louisiana System. SUSLA change-agent Sonya Hester and her faculty leadership team dazzled participants with a humorous but rigorous account of the emergence of female faculty leadership in a historically male-dominated institution. Conferees also considered a smorgasbord of resolutions, including a statement concerning higher education funding (described elsewhere in this newsletter).

With each successive meeting, the Alexandria movement strengthens and improves. Be sure to attend the next one, which is tentatively scheduled for April 23<sup>rd</sup>.



Commissioner Joseph C. Rallo addresses Alexandria conferees



Ramona Olvera evaluates tensions between the workforce and liberal arts



Olivier Moreteau looks at Euro-American differences

## GRAMBLING VOTES NO CONFIDENCE IN LARKIN, PUMPS OUT CRITICAL RESOLUTIONS

The short period of optimism that followed the departure of Grambling interim President Cynthia Warrick has evaporated in short order. New President Willie Larkin's honeymoon



period came to an abrupt end as the Grambling Faculty Senate passed a vote of no confidence in the novice leader. In support of their vote, Grambling faculty leaders cited an overall lack of communication and a failure to develop plans for solving the numerous problems on that ailing institution, whether deteriorating facilities or financial havoc or the diminution in the number of programs and curricula. Faculty leaders grew so desperate for communication that they resorted to freedom-of-information requests in order to get to the bottom of this abysmal story. Grambling leaders supplemented the no-confidence vote by passing a bevy of measures intended to expose as well as to correct the errors of the Larkin administration. One resolution called for the resolution of an assortment of grievous deficiencies, whether the failure to fill positions through national searches or the unsafe condition of campus structures or the collapse of library acquisitions programs. A second resolution declared the loss of confidence in Provost Janet Guyden while slamming the rude, contemptuous behavior of administration members toward faculty. A third resolution proclaimed no confidence in Grambling Vice-President Otto Meyer, paying special attention to the breakdown of the nursing program. This suite of three resolutions and a no-confidence votes, for a total of four condemnations, is unprecedented not only among HBCUs but across higher education generally. It is puzzling that a top-level administration that seems obsessed with "productivity" should not provide help to or otherwise clean up a Grambling administration that has turned a legendary HBCU into an apocalyptically wasting asset.

# Lifestyle Feature

## THE OLD-TIMEY AIRFIELDS OF LOUISIANA

Academic people travel; they know well all the commercial airports here in the sugar-cane state. What they may not know, however, is that Louisiana, with its gigantic offshore oil operations and its wide spaces between population centers, abounds in “general aviation” airfields: airfields used by non-scheduled, private flyers for everything from helicopter transport to rigs to undercover CIA operations (per notorious Baton Rouge flyer Barry Seal). Although not everyone enjoys the time, luxury, or aptitude to ply the skies, many airfields merit a visit owing to their evocative conjuration of the golden age of aviation or owing to their remarkable setting or owing to the human and industrial novelties on their premises—on *airfields* rather than commercial *airports*. Let us take a little survey of some of the most interesting venues, excluding those that are indeed commercial airports (some of which, such as Lake Charles Regional, with its huge platform for helicopters headed to the rigs, also offer more than a bit of local color).

Beginning deep in the south, the professor-turned-seagull first sees Houma-Terrebonne Airport swell out of the wetlands. Suggesting that Minnesota is not the only “land of lakes,” the Houma airport gives the incoming flyer the impression of fresh, safe ground in an exotic new world—and all of that, even despite the presence of oil-servicing aircraft. Way-off Houma airport, with its swamp-adjacent context, gives rise to a variety of special meteorological effects, including a thin layer of haze that, in the morning, hangs about four feet off the ground, with the result that a pedestrian could, so to speak, operate on visual flight rules below the waste and instrument flight rules up in the thinking zone. Only a few miles up the road from Houma is equally far-away Thibodaux Municipal Airport, a swath of land ferociously and definitively cut into a stand of old-growth trees, the nearness of which gives the arriving and departing pilot a bit of a thrill. With one hanger and a broken telephone, the Thibodaux Airport harkens back to the days of barnstormers who bounced into the backwoods to make a quick buck from bedazzled locals.

Only a short hop north from these deep-bayou landing places stand—or, rather, stretch—the many airports in the penumbra of New Orleans. Within New Orleans itself is surprisingly busy and yet disconcertingly vacant Lakefront Airport, a jetty reaching into Lake Pontchartrain (and thereby leaving no room for error; too fast an arrival and you’re in a drink that is a little more brackish than a Pat O’Brien hurricane!). A remnant of a bygone era, Lakefront Airport fronts a magnificent art deco style terminal that, nowadays, houses immigration service officers but that, to



Louisiana hosts the Stearman and other vintage aircraft clubs



Louisiana Regional Airport



Esler Field near Alexandria hosted pilots during World War II

the imaginative viewer, could call up recollections of Amelia Earhart and Howard Hughes. A little farther out from the core of the Crescent City comes St. John the Baptist Parish Airport in Reserve, conveniently stationed along the Airline Highway. The visitor to St. John will quickly imagine himself or herself to have slipped back into the Vietnam era and the age of social protest while wandering around the sadly if evocatively decaying vintage military jets parked on the apron, including a genuine F-4 fighter.

Moving upstream from New Orleans, wing-flapping observers will next alight at Louisiana Regional Airport in the open spaces between Gonzales and Burnside, just behind the Tanger Mall. One of the liveliest and best-spirited airports in Louisiana, this fresh field enjoys both frequent use by everything from powered parachutes to private jets and benefits from positioning just above an elbow in the Mississippi River, a venue characterized by vast open spaces and thereby the feeling of the imminence of an elevating experience. An outdoor aircraft parking area allows visitors to view a surprising range of aviation wonders, including, occasionally, a frequently visiting gigantic Antonov biplane.

Similar prodigies dot the riverside airports in the south-central section of the state. Over in but north of Baton Rouge nestles False River Regional Airport, a pet project of former Governor Huey Long’s that features an improbably gigantic runway aimed straight north at the levee of the Mississippi River. A lavish novelty with minimal traffic, this usually vacant

venue gives any science-fiction fan the feeling of having alighted on the surface of a (only possibly inhabited) planet. The biggest attraction of the river-proximate kind is surely Abbeville Chris Crusta Memorial Airport, which, in addition to its fleet of helicopters and crop-dusters, provides a home to the regional Stearman club, thus ensuring that there is always a stand of vintage biplanes in the famous blue

and yellow livery of that legendary tube-and-fabric flyer. Opelousas, too, offers a strip around twenty miles north of Interstate 10, replete with crop-dusters and a few birds that have seen better days. But the real agricultural action is to be found at Jennings, near I-10 exit 64, where a major agricultural operations keeps cheerful yellow “ag” planes in the air year-round (they are often seen turning and gyrating over the interstate). In recent years, Jennings Airport has become so busy that it has lost some of its down-home character, yet it will still entertain those addicted to low-level, high-“g” maneuvering. Ditto for little Walsh Airport, near I-10 exit 54, a tiny strip with a bad reputation among insects owing to its abundance of predatory yellow planes!

—Continued on page 8



—Continued from page 7

Louisiana is a curious state insofar as it has more than a few major economic centers without the expected density of populations. One astounding aviation-related evidence of this phenomenon is Chennault International Airport in Lake Charles, only a few miles up the road from the regular commercial airport in the Contraband City. Chennault, a former military installation, offers not only a gigantic runway but a suite of airport refurbishing and related technology firms. As a result, passing viewer can often view large inventories of even larger aircraft out in the middle of, if not nowhere, at least nowhere's suburb. Recently, the traveler on the Lake Charles Loop, I-210, suddenly saw two Boeing 767s parked in the mi-



New Orleans  
Lakefront Airport

rage-like mist while a Dassault jet circled overhead. A similar sense of the unexpected also haunts more northerly airports, such as Marksville, where the nearby casino attracts well-heeled patrons who dot the otherwise agrarian landscape with an astounding array of private aerial conveyances. Only a few miles away, in the far

outskirts of only semi-urban Alexandria, Esler Regional Airport provides a stripped-down and eerily vacant memory of the Charleston-flapper days with its tiny bare-bones art deco terminal and a surrounding high forest that suggests having fallen into a time warp. In Shreveport, too, one finds Ozymandias-style near-ruins. Private Lucien Field suffered during the great age of hurricanes (2005–2008), with airplanes flipped upside-down and even now bits of aircraft debris, the archaeological remains of the future, scattered hither and yon.



Lucien Field suffered during the age of hurricanes

This not-so-airborne survey describes only a few of the marvels and de facto monuments to the history of flight that stretch across Louisiana. Heck, it didn't even mention Patterson Airport, near Morgan City, where there is a full-scale aviation museum as well as an exciting seaplane base! If you don't yet fly, hop in the car and visit some of these under-appreciated landmarks (is not an airfield the most literal sort of "landmark"?). Take a picnic and talk to the colorful aviators. You'll have fun!

## Thirsty Thursday Celebrates St. Patrick's Day!



6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. St. Patrick's Day  
March 17, 2016

Enjoy a brief talk about the history of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in south Louisiana by Dr. Terrence Fitzmorris, associate dean at Tulane University, then pick the brains of Pelican House experts, Thaddeus Swart and Gavin Jobe, on the drinking trends, straight cocktails and multicultural dishes that play a large part in the holiday festivities. The event includes a Jameson tasting and small plates. Hosted by Pelican House, in partnership with the Louisiana Historical Association.

Sponsored by Jameson and Republic. Free for members, \$15 for guests. For more information, please contact [CapitolParkMuseum@crt.la.gov](mailto:CapitolParkMuseum@crt.la.gov) or 225-342-5428.



## LSU SUPERVISORS TO BLOW \$200K ERECTING BRAZEN IDOL

Those who worry that Louisiana has fallen into apathy, and those who think that educational leaders are short on money, should have attended the January meeting of the LSU Board of Supervisors meeting, where celebrities of every stripe staged a high-ticket celebratory circus in support of a proposal to erect a statue commemorating basketball star "Pistol" Pete Maravich. This preposterous event began with a gaudy parade of friends and relatives of the bucket-shooting non-graduate, whose sentimental panegyrics offered stiff competition for the equally laudatory yarns spun by both civic leaders and members of the LSU Board, several of which went so far as to credit the transformation of American culture to the dribbling hoopster. No less than fifteen basketball acolytes took time from their presumably useful employments to escort the Board down sports memory lane. The goal of the event was, economically, as high as a basketball net, but, with respect to art history and educational advancement, the goal was rather lower: the setting up of a brazen idol in recognition of the pre-baccalaureate player and the adjusting of the rules for on-campus memorials so as to bypass existing academic minima. Unidentified sources put the cost of the not-so-golden calf at \$200K, enough to hire four to five instructors at the going (admittedly inadequate) rates.



## FORMER LSU CHANCELLOR SWEEPED INTO POST-RETIREMENT EARNINGS FLAP

A sore spot among advocates for salary equity has always been the perpetuation of administrative salaries into the period subsequent to administrative service, indeed occasionally into retirement. More than a few public institutions either quietly allow administrative officials to continue above-par earnings after their departure from office or even include such time-extended golden parachutes in their initial offers of employment. Given that the budget for any university is a finite quantity, these long-term income insurance policies intensify the stratification of salaries and depress the wages of those engaged in the actual work of teaching and research. Given that many top-level administrative officials are sacked—or, in the language of the trade, are offered “the opportunity” to resign and to “pursue other interests” or “renew their commitment to teaching and research”—these post-employment emoluments amount to an inverse incentive plan in which faulty service leads to long-term rewards. Fortunately, not every golden parachute opens with equal elegance. Scholars in usually cool Colorado turned up the heat when word broke that former Colorado State Chancellor Michael Martin, who also served a four-plus year term as the Chancellor of the Baton Rouge Old War Skule, was continuing to receive a handsome six-figure salary even after departure from office—a salary that put him in the top twenty earners in the Colorado State System, even despite his having abdicated. The hot mountain of controversy air inflamed a national blog, where the full [story](#) appears.



Former A&M Chancellor Mike Martin snow-plowed in Colorado compensation controversy



## JOIN LSUNITED

### 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**

## INVESTIGATIVE REPORT COMPARES ATHLETIC SUBSIDIES, FACULTY CUTS

The apparent solvency of the LSU A&M big-time athletic program—a solvency possible only through lax accounting that overlooks the enormous market value of the freely provided facilities and campus trademark—deflects attention from the high cost of athletic programs in the thirty-plus other campuses around the state. Television station WVUE in New Orleans detected the camouflage and launched an investigative [report](#), looking into not only the “numbers” related to cash flow, but comparing those accountings to other campus costs. The results of the probe are nothing less than devastating. Northwestern State University, which recently cut its journalism, chemistry, economics, and physics programs, which fired a cartload of tenured professors, and which has plastered the state with expensive highway billboards declaring that its only goal is “yours,” allocated nearly four million dollars to prop up its sports program and paid over \$110,000.00 in guarantees to rent-a-win teams that could pose no challenge to its gridiron gladiators. Humble McNeese coughed up \$250K in subsidies for blow-over football opponents while floating \$3,489,216.00 in direct athletic subsidies and also diverting \$833,789.00 in gambling revenue that had been earmarked for “education” to athletic purposes. Louisiana Tech, which started with four-and-one-half million dollars in budget-line support for athletics, also sluiced another three-quarters of a million dollars to athletic competition by charging off coaches’ and athletic administrators’ salaries to its College of Education. The only item missing from the investigative report was evidence of any sign of regret on the part of the leadership responsible for upending proper spending priorities.



## LSU GRADUATE SCHOOL RESPONDS TO RESUSCITATION

For years if not decades, the LSU Graduate School has barely performed its mission of support to the highest level of education. Unfunded by a state with little concern for postgraduate study, the Graduate School has managed to process paper and to hood doctoral graduates but has never been able to emerge from the shadows of the larger, disciplinary colleges. Now, under the able leadership of first-year Dean Michelle Massé, the Graduate School has made two advances. First, with the consent of forward-thinking Provost Richard Koubek, the Graduate School has migrated from the Office of Research and Economic Development to the Office of Academic Affairs, thus re-establishing its identity as a premiere academic unit. Second, Dean Massé has accelerated the process by which the Graduate Council, long an appointive entity, would be populated through elections among colleagues. Kudos to Dean Massé for resetting the Graduate School onto a track to preeminence.



## BRAC, Koubek, FACULTY SENATE OPEN DIALOGUE

Another “first” occurred in the LSU A&M sphere of influence when Provost Richard Koubek initiated a three-way dialogue with Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) President Adam Knapp and LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope. During the hour-long opening meeting in the downtown offices of BRAC, Koubek, along with Cope, identified areas in which businesses and universities could advance one another and make better use of the formidable talent pool available in higher education. Included in the discussion were speculations concerning the improvement of the overall cultural appeal of Baton Rouge through the extension of a university presence into unconventional venues. Phase one of the new program will feature a ten-member faculty discussion group which will hold a series of conversations with both BRAC officials and area businessmen. This program is in its infancy but bodes fair to grow Goliath-sized results!



Baton Rouge Area Chamber.

BRAC, Koubek, and FS to maximize talent use

## LACARTE TRANSACTIONS TO PASS THROUGH WORKDAY

Those on the LSU campus who have occasion to use procurement cards (the former LaCarte card) will rejoice to learn that they will no longer sluice transactions through the complicated reconciliation process on the PAWS/Moodle workspace platform. Beginning with the advent of the Workday enterprise system on July 1<sup>st</sup>, procurement card transactions will pass through the new system via what promises to be a clean and easy interface. Thanks to IT Czar Brian Nichols and his IT team for keeping the baton on the sprint when it comes to the Workday and related implementations.





## DEMONSTRATIONS PROLIFERATE, REMIND OF NEED FOR COORDINATION

Perhaps the biggest news of the month was the return of student activism. *Newsletter* readers up and down Louisiana have marveled at the cleverly denominated “HEAT” (“Higher Education All Together”) rally that drew no less than 2,000 protestors, most of them students, to the state capitol on February 24<sup>th</sup>. For this extraordinary effort, faculty members on every campus owe the Council of Student Body Presidents (“COSBP”) a huge debt of gratitude. Now that the demonstration has passed, leaders of every stripe—student, faculty, and administration—may take a retrospective glance and may debrief, looking at the instructive back-story to the HEAT event.

Little publicity attended two other public actions in support of higher education: a “Walkout for Higher Education” on [February 18<sup>th</sup>](#) and a “March the Capitol” parade on [February 19<sup>th</sup>](#). Although surely organized with the best intentions, these events barely materialized, with the unfortunate result that those legislators who noticed them inferred a weakness in support for higher education. The HEAT rally itself nearly cooled off owing to concern by Southern University boosters (who spoke on condition of anonymity) that the incendiary, neo-Bolshevik imagery associated with the HEAT rally might backfire by frightening conservative legislators and also owing to a breakdown in the information distribution system, with the Regents sending updates only to system-level officials, many of whom lacked the information and perhaps also the courage to support this remarkably effective action. What this retrospective study of the HEAT and allied rallies shows is the need for far better communication with members of the statewide higher education community as well as the need for better advising of students, many of whom seek to help higher education but most of whom have been kept in the dark about strategy by administrations fearful of repercussions in the upper reaches of state government.



HEAT rally draws kudos while suggesting need for leadership

## LOUIS NETWORK LAUNCHES OPEN ACCESS PROJECT



### LOUIS launches open-access study

The regal-sounding acronym LOUIS usually brings to mind the low-visibility but high-importance, somewhat secret service that provides the databases that nowadays provide Louisiana scholars with the raw materials of research and that fill the electronic shelves of modern libraries. LOUIS, however, is first and foremost an information provider and education tool. From LOUIS chief Sara Zimmerman, the newsletter has learned that this statewide service is endeavoring to reduce the cost of education through the use of e-textbooks and open access publications, thereby reducing the overall cost of delivering information to Louisiana’s studying citizens. A major first step has already occurred in the form of a [report](#) that describes the opportunities and that develops a “curriculum-driven” approach to library acquisitions. Interested readers are invited to participate in an online [survey](#) intended to refine and improve the LOUIS initiative.

## LSU OAA HARNESSING INNOVATION STREAM

What had been a trickle of administrative innovation from the LSU A&M Office of Academic Affairs has lately swelled into a spring tide owing to the outreach efforts of newly-appointed Executive Vice-President and Provost Richard Koubek. In the past month alone, two major advances have occurred. First, Koubek revived, recharged, and otherwise redirected the LSU Budget Committee, getting ahead of the budget crisis by briefing an array of new members and in introducing a new era of openness, transparency, and readiness to entertain new ideas. Second, Koubek told the LSU A&M Faculty Senate of his plans to begin revising the LSU vision statement, *Flagship 2020*, noting that this ophthalmologically designated year was a little too much in the near vision and that the time had come to think farther ahead as well as to catch up to current ideas about the future of higher education. Congratulations to Provost Koubek on making the right moves at the right time.



## LOMBARDI OMISSION WAS REPORTED IN JULY

Sometimes the *Newsletter* staff is glad when it is scooped. Although our cub reporters thought themselves the first to have discovered the omission of John Lombardi from an [online](#) list of LSU Presidents that is presented as a kind of mythical genealogy of the current administration, the *Newsletter* investigative reporting staff was recently approached by an undercover informant who provided a letter indicating that top LSU System officials had been informed of the omission on July 8, 2015. Given that letter and given that the LSU central administration has not corrected the omission even following the *Newsletter* story, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the exclusion is intentional and that an academic dishonesty violation—a wilful falsification of history for the purpose of increasing the career value of a publication—has occurred over on Lakeshore Drive.



The invisible President—new evidence shows LSU falsifying historical record



**LSU**  
— School of —  
**Veterinary Medicine**

**Community  
Practice offers  
primary care**



**10% discount on all services for all  
LSU faculty, staff and students. No  
referral required!**

**ALL ANIMALS...ALL SERVICES...ALL THE TIME**

**Call today for an  
appointment!**

**225-578-9600 (pets  
and small exotics)**

**225-578-9500 (horses  
and farm animals)**

**LSU Veterinary  
Teaching Hospital  
Skip Bertman Drive  
at River Road  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803**

**[www.vetmed.lsu.edu](http://www.vetmed.lsu.edu)**

LSU's full-service Veterinary Teaching Hospital is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year; from small pets to horses, exotics and farm animals, emergency medicine to preventative care—we're here for you and your animals.

We have more board-certified specialists than anywhere else in Louisiana. Our specialty services include internal medicine, surgery, anesthesiology, cardiology, dermatology, ophthalmology, oncology, nephrology, reproduction, integrative medicine, rehabilitation, exotics, wildlife and diagnostic imaging (including CT and MRI).

Our Community Practice Service offers primary veterinary care for LSU employees and students. Come visit us for your pet's annual check-ups, preventative health care, disease diagnosis and management, micro-chipping, and health certificates.

**LOVE PURPLE  
LIVE GOLD**

**[facebook.com/LSUVTH](https://facebook.com/LSUVTH)  
[facebook.com/LSUSVM](https://facebook.com/LSUSVM)**

**[@LSUVetMed](https://instagram.com/LSUVetMed)  
[instagram.com/LSUVetMed](https://instagram.com/LSUVetMed)**



# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

## *The Martian* (Ridley Scott, 2015)

—Reviewed by Carl Freedman

Ridley Scott has had not only one of the longest careers among current moviemakers (it began in the mid-1960s) but one of the most uneven: his work has ranged from the utterly brilliant to the nearly unwatchable. For me, his best achievements remain two of his earliest feature films, those twin science-fiction masterpieces, *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982). In his latest film, *The Martian*, he returns (not quite for the first time) to science fiction. But here it is a kind of science fiction very different from that exemplified by his early triumphs in the genre—both of which portray a world vastly different from the empirical environment we ourselves inhabit. In *Alien*, long-distance space travel across the galaxy is so common and well established that it is used for routine commercial purposes. In *Blade Runner*, much of the human race has moved off-world, leaving mainly the poor and the very rich behind; and androids almost indistinguishable from human beings are in common use. *The Martian*, by contrast, is set in a world not significantly different from our own, except in the one particular that NASA is running a program of manned (and womanned) space travel to, and exploration of, Mars.

As the film begins, a crew of astronauts in the early days of a Mars mission encounters an unexpected and violent dust storm on the surface of the red planet. The storm poses many dangers, the gravest of which is that it threatens to tip over the astronauts' MAV, the "Mars ascent vehicle" that will take them back to the orbiting spaceship that travels between Mars and Earth. Since they have no way to right a tipped-over vehicle, the crew, in order to avoid being stranded, must abort the whole mission, get back into the MAV, and return to the spaceship. Unfortunately, one of their number, Mark Watney (Matt Damon), the mission's botanist and mechanical engineer (all the astronauts have double specialties), was struck by a piece of flying debris propelled by the storm; it punctured his spacesuit and, evidently, killed him. His crewmates have no choice but regretfully to leave his body behind as they lift off from Mars with no time to spare.

It turns out, though, that Mark is not dead after all. By a kind of million-to-one fluke, he survived the puncturing of his spacesuit; and he is able to make it back to the safety of the Hab (the climate-controlled dwelling on the Martian surface where humans can function without spacesuits). He is injured, but not so seriously that he is unable to perform the procedures necessary to heal himself (all the astronauts have some basic medical training). He is, however, now alone as no one has ever been alone before: the only human being on an entire planet. But Mark has little time or inclination to meditate on the philosophical implications of such an existence, for he faces a huge number of practical problems concerned with sheer physical survival. Since his best hope for rescue is the next scheduled Mars mission, which is several years away, it is certain that he will have to manage by himself for quite a while. One of the most basic and perhaps the most interesting of his problems is providing himself, on a barren planet, with enough food to avoid starving to death.

In order to assess Scott's film, it is useful to compare it with Andy Weir's novel of the same title, on which it is based, and whose text Drew Goddard's screenplay follows about as closely as a movie script can follow a novel. The story of Weir's book is one of the great Cinderella stories of recent publishing history. Originally self-published in 2011 on Weir's personal website, and available there for free to anyone who cared to download it, *The Martian* attracted a following that ultimately led to its hardback and paperback publication by a major commercial press, to its appearance on the list of bestsellers compiled by *The New York Times*, and, of course, to its adaptation into a film by a well-known director and featuring one of Hollywood's most popular stars.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is the most obvious precursor-text of Weir's novel, which poses much the same question as that suggested in the earlier pages of that foundational myth of the middle-class ego: What would it be

like for a human being to live entirely by himself in an unfamiliar and in many ways hostile environment? The chief interest of *The Martian* lies in the ingenuity, detail, and (so one gathers) technical plausibility with which Weir delineates how a fairly ordinary human being—although, to be sure, one far more intelligent, knowledgeable, and resolute than average—might manage for an extended period of time on the surface of Mars, with no resources other than those likely to have been left behind by a six-astronaut mission. Mark Watney's botanical training is especially important, as he figures out a way to grow enough potatoes to provide sufficient calories to sustain life. The reader may reflect that, despite all the sensational technological advances like those that could make travel to Mars feasible, the basis of human life as we know it remains pretty much what it has been since the dawn of civilization some eleven thousand years ago: growing edible crops in the dirt. It is difficult to imagine a more "realistic" representation of an experience—being stranded alone on Mars—that no human being has actually had.

Unfortunately, Weir's scientific and technological sophistication—he is a software engineer with an intense lifelong interest in space travel—is not matched by a novelistic ability to create compelling, three-dimensional characters. Mark Watney is so blank that it often becomes difficult to care whether he survives his ordeal or not. Weir seems partly aware of the problem, for he often goes rather out of his way to give Mark a "colorful" personality, mainly by way of a sardonic sense of humor. But these efforts actually make matters worse, for everything designed to make Mark vivid is constructed entirely out of the most banal and tedious clichés: so that, when not merely uninteresting, Mark is actively irritating. As for the other characters—Mark's crewmates who escaped the Martian dust storm, and various NASA personnel—they are all so dimly realized that it is almost impossible to remember (or care) who is who, sometimes even as to a character's gender (they are all referred to by surnames). *The Martian* has been compared by uncritical reviewers to the works of Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov; and Weir does indeed seem to have been influenced by their interest in the engineering problems likely to be posed by space travel. But, compared to Weir, Heinlein and Asimov are Dostoyevskian or Proustian masters of complex characterization and psychological subtlety.

Scott's film is measurably superior to Weir's novel, however, for it shares the latter's strengths while ameliorating some of its deficiencies. Two matters seem to me most important here. One concerns the characterization of the protagonist Mark Watney. Though he hardly exists on the page as a plausible representation of a human being, on the screen he has the immense advantage of being played by one of the best Hollywood actors of his generation. Matt Damon is, indeed, an inspired casting choice on Scott's part. Helped along, no doubt, by his blandly generic handsomeness, Damon has long specialized in playing undemonstrative men not generally disposed to expressing strong feelings of any sort; and yet he is an actor of sufficient subtlety and resourcefulness that he is able to force his characters, as it were, to reveal more about themselves than they are naturally inclined to do. Damon perfectly conveys the essential ordinariness of Weir's Watney (which seems, indeed, inherited from the real-life personae of the actual NASA astronauts—has any, except for Wally Schirra, had a memorable or distinctive public personality?). At the same time, through a thousand small gestures, facial expressions, and tones of voice, Damon makes Watney live as Weir (and the screenwriter Goddard) never do. Reading the novel, one is often bored by being alone on Mars with Watney, for he hardly seems like company at all. Watching Damon on screen, one takes a real interest in Watney and his all-important potato farming. Even Watney's hopelessly platitudinous wisecracks are a good deal less annoying when delivered in Damon's voice.



— Continued page 16



## THIRD-GENERATION FINANCIAL WELLNESS SEMINAR COMING TO LSU A&M

For the last two years, the LSU Faculty Senate has sponsored a financial wellness seminar that has featured finance experts from investment firm Thirty North and that has benefited from sumptuous catering by the Campus Federal Credit Union. Those two highly successful, heavily attended seminars have addressed the fundamentals of financial planning at the introductory level. This year, on April 19<sup>th</sup>, the Faculty Senate will continue the streak of helpful innovation by creating a new, third-generation financial readiness seminar that will concentrate on portfolio management, retirement planning, and retirement investing, with particular attention to portfolio development and to the kinds of investments suitable for portfolios and various career and post-career stages. Topping the bill will be finance expert Don Chance, a professor at LSU A&M. All faculty from all higher education institutions will be welcome to attend. Stand by for more details!



Don Chance to offer financial wellness seminar

## PROFESSORIAL ACTION LEADS TO UPGRADE FOR LSUHSC-S INTERIM CHANCELLOR

In its most recent issue, the *Newsletter* reported on the strange gyrations at the LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport (LSUHSC-S), where faculty recommendations regarding the selection of an interim Chancellor had gone not only unheeded but unanswered and where the interventionist wing of the LSU System leadership planned to introduce an interim leader who had no medical credentials and who had worked for a pair of oppressive regimes in the middle east. In a clear victory for faculty governance, pressure from faculty reached the point where no amount of fish oil could lower the political equivalent of the sphygmomanometer. Sensing a disaster in the making, the top dogs in the LSU System backed away, appointing not the imported leader but, rather, an esteemed local figure, Shreveport dental surgeon [G. E. Ghali](#). Always reluctant to admit an error, the “players” at the LSU System retained the aforementioned qualification-unburdened candidate as a “Strategic Advisor,” whatever that might mean, and also deleted from the public announcement that “advisor’s” association with the Saudi Arabian government and with an assortment of anti-labor initiatives.



Appointment of E E Ghali as LSUHSC-S interim Chancellor marks a victory for faculty governance

## ALEXANDER UPGRADES COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Rhetoricians on the *Newsletter* staff have previously enumerated the stylistic excrescences in the prose of academic chief executives, most recently by listing the logical errors and grammatical blunders in an essayistic epistle from the LSU A&M President concerning the persecution of lively-languaged professors. Apparently, LSU GHQ has recognized the error of its ways. The evidence: a remarkable upgrade in both the style and the content of Alexander’s avuncular missives to faculty, staff, and students. Alexander’s latest transmission, a frank update on the progress in the legislative special session and an honest evaluation of the financial prospects for the university, succeeded in removing the ambiguity implicit in previous letters, where guarded allusions to impending crises balanced awkwardly against saccharine enthusiasms concerning LSU achievements. The new transmission, presumably the first in a series, marks a move away from “spin” and toward information and dialogue. Improvement occurs even in these budget-plagued times!



## UNDER-APPRECIATED LOUISIANA LEADERS STRIKE JACKPOT ELSEWHERE

Last month, the *Newsletter* reported that former Shreveport medical campus Chancellor Robert Barish had found his way to greener pastures as the top banana in the vast University of Chicago medical system. The *Newsletter* paused to ask whether the high turnover in Louisiana academic administration resulted from the quest for quality or for the lack of appreciation for our own resources and likewise to wonder whether the high cost of repeated searches yielded improved results. This month, as if in answer to those questions, the streak of big promotions for former LSU administrators continues. From septentrional Connecticut comes word that former LSU System Vice President Michael Gargano has arrived at the top of the pyramid with an [appointment](#) as President of St. Vincent’s College. Gargano, who ruffled more than a few feathers through his reliance on data and his avoidance of prejudice and fantasy, earned a reputation at LSU as a master of fact and an advocate for empirical evidence. Those attributes seem better appreciated “up north” than here in the land of duck hunting and truck enhancement.



## SUPERVISOR CONTRACTS BENEDICT ARNOLD SYNDROME

In theory, the management boards of the four higher education systems in Louisiana aspire to support, protect, defend, and advance higher education. Theory, unfortunately, may not always play out in practice, as is evidenced by a recent column by LSU A&M Supervisor Rolfe McCollister. A “Benedict Arnold moment” if there ever was one, that [column](#) flatly declares that “we have too many four-year institutions” in Louisiana, a state with a single-digit percentage of adults completing a baccalaureate degree. Apparently blind to the decay of facilities and the decline of the public space in Louisiana, this cheerleader for low-level neo-conservatism declares that he “never saw much impact” from the elimination of 30,000 state jobs and that there is no case for raising taxes on the private sector (in which the Supervisor in question reaps substantial profits, all while the rate of contributions to higher education by Louisiana management board members is among the lowest in the nation). With friends like that, higher education certainly needs no enemies.



## PENNINGTON CONSULTANTS PRESCRIBE AGEISM

Even the American Medical Association admits that the majority of problems presented to primary care physicians are of a psychogenic nature. Illness of the spirit was certainly on display during the January LSU Board of Supervisors meeting when a team of outside consultants presented recommendations for increasing the productivity of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center. Although the consultants had compiled a formidable volume of data and had certainly done their homework, their interpretations and proposals centered disproportionately on the shortcomings of the old and established and lauded the imagined promise of youth and inexperience (and, with that, compliance). For example, the consultants interpreted minimal productivity among younger scientists as symptomatic of future potential and an indication of the need for additional support and start-up time while they interpreted the same shortfalls in senior researchers as an indication that a vague, threatening “something” should be done to deal with the old goats (which, at Pennington, with its paradoxical “rolling tenure,” tenure that expires after five years, i.e., tenure that is not tenure, surely means “dismissal”). Would it not be reasonable to expect that an institute that specializes in population health should recognize the needs and capacities of its various age-defined faculty populations?



## TIP OF THE MONTH: AMBER-BATH SALVEATION CREAM

Wizened, sale-scarred shoppers know that shelf positioning tells a complex tale about products. Products only reach eye level on the shelves when manufacturers can afford to pay placement fees—bribes—to retailers. The most innovative products either fly up to the tip-top shelf or sink to the floor, where only the curious are willing to squat. In mile-high Boulder, the *Newsletter* evaluation team spotted—sank to—a new product on the very bottom shelf in one of America’s trendiest Whole Foods mega-stores. That new creation: Amber-Bath Rosemary-orange SALVEation cream. Fragrant of sweetly astringent citrus and aerial rosemary, this ultra-pure cream, composed of only beeswax, olive oil, and cocoa butter (in addition to the healing, aromatic oils), provides a perfect balance of unctuousness and texture. Effortlessly spreading as it warms in the hands, SALVEation provides healing and relief to even the roughest, most chapped skin. This godsend in beeswax form also upgrades lips and heels; it allows everyone in the *Newsletter* office to pass the tender touch test! Before you handle that silk tie or scarf, be sure to smear on a bit of SALVEation so that your hands show respect to fine textiles. Those without access to Colorado may order [online](#).



Amber-Bath SALVEation

## THE ECONOMIST STUDIES BUCHANAN FIRING, HAILS FREE SPEECH RESOLUTION

One of the axioms of ancient tragedy, whether from the pen of Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides, holds that bad actions exert their unfavorable influence for years, indeed up to four generations and beyond. So it is that the Teresa Buchanan case has now found its way to the pages of one of the world’s most prestigious periodicals, *The Economist*. Heading up an article on the increasing popularity of policies in support of free speech, the *Economist* citation presents the behavior of the LSU administration in an antithetical position vis-à-vis the actions of institutions that prize the brisk evaluation of ideas and the robust language that often accompanies energetic debate. *The Economist* notes the [resolution](#) recently passed by the LSU Faculty Senate in which more than thirty Senators and sponsors call on the administration to adopt a sinewy free speech and free expression policy.

**The Economist**

The Economist notes contrasts between LSU faculty attitudes toward free speech and administrative repression

## VLOSKY DIGS AG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Those who have read the parable of the mustard seed know that a little effort, especially when that effort occurs in the fertile fields of agricultural studies, can go a long way. AgCenter activist Richard Vlosky recently noticed that few accomplishments from the AgCenter were turning up in the *LSU Graduate School Newsletter* even despite the merger-consolidation of LSU and its Agricultural counterpart (a merger that might be described as the most widely publicized marriage in which no one believes, there being some doubt about the authority of those who celebrated the union and about the willingness of the parties to the betrothal). Vlosky contacted obliging Graduate School Dean Michelle Massé and, presto, AgCenter faculty may now submit accounts of their deeds for the faculty spotlight section of the Graduate School periodical. Applause to all—especially to the Graduate School officials who have imitated the sometimes grand example of this *Newsletter*!



Richard Vlosky

## TOO MANY COLLEGES? NOT SO, CRIES NEW BLOGGER

As surely as spring unfolds the crocus blooms, so, when the season is right, fresh leaves unfurl on the snappy twigs of controversy. The fertile medium of Southeastern Louisiana University, the hatchery that gave us Dayne Sherman and James Kirylo, has spawned another champion of academe in the person of Political Science Professor Kurt Corbello. Astounded that so many Louisiana leaders have subscribed to the myth that our state supports too many colleges, Corbello set out to uncover the facts. The result of his inquiries: a study exploding a whole matrix of myths, including the suggestion that other, more successful states fund fewer higher education institutions, per capita, than Louisiana. Cutting through bogus statistics, Corbello discovers, for example, that the number of college-level institutions in Florida tops 100 (and is therefore far less efficient than Louisiana’s higher education systems). Part of a new blog, Corbello’s data- and chart-rich [column](#) is a must-read for anyone preparing to parlay with a legislator or to educate friends, colleagues, and community members.



## COMMISSIONER ON THE ROLL AGAIN

Followers of the [legends](#) of the saints know that the shoes worn by the remains of St. Spyridon routinely wear out, indeed require yearly replacement owing to the reported perambulations of this still-active spirit. Although he may not quite match the perennial itineracy of the Mediterranean saint, Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph C. Rallo clearly loves to roll along, merrily or otherwise. The ambling Commissioner has again been on the move in February, this time with an innovative information exchange in the New Orleans area in which educators, students, and business leaders dialogue. We have to give it to the Commissioner for coming up with a new idea seemingly every month!



## LAINE LETTER REVEALS DIVERSION OF FRINGE MONEY FROM RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

Benefits and retirement campaigner Roger Laine has issued a letter to the United States Department of Health and Human Services in which he demonstrates that federal grant overhead money intended to cover retirement benefits for faculty members is being illegally diverted, in Louisiana institutions, to cover the unfunded accrued liability of the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL). Laine warns DHHS officials that universities collude with the state retirement agencies to confiscate cash that should go to faculty members' retirement accounts. The full text of Laine's epistolary grenade can be read [online](#).



—Continued from page 13

It might be added that some of the other actors in the film—most notably Jessica Chastain as the commander of the crew that unintentionally strands Watney, Jeff Daniels as the director of NASA, and Chiwetel Ejiofor as the head of NASA's Mars program—are pretty good too, thus giving the secondary characters, who are little more than stick figures in the book, some vividness and plausibility on screen.

The second big way that Scott's film surpasses Weir's novel concerns the visual representation of the Martian surface. Though Weir's powers of description are hardly more robust than his powers of characterization, he cannot be faulted here in quite the same way. While the novel—in the hands of a good novelist—is the most powerful form ever invented for the delineation of human character, neither it nor any other literary genre has ever been much good at visual description. Language, like every other medium, has its limitations as well as its strengths, and words are severely limited in their ability to convey a detailed, memorable sense of what something looks like: hence the proverb, "One picture is worth a thousand words." Motion pictures are perhaps, in some ways, worth even more, and Scott (together with his cinematographer Dariusz Wolski and a host of art directors) offers what may well be the most impressive visualization of the surface of the red (or, actually, reddish) planet yet achieved. Clearly, the filmmakers have carefully studied the actual photographs of Mars that space vehicles have been sending back to Earth since 1965. We get quite a few relative close-ups of the immediate area in which Mark Watney performs the innumerable chores necessary to keep himself alive, but also longer shots that given a stunningly more panoramic view of the alien desert landscape. As with the detailed descriptions of Mark's potato farming and other survival strategies, we think that, yes, this seems like what life would be like for someone in his situation. Once again, the film achieves an astonishingly "realistic" portrayal of life on the surface of Mars.

Unfortunately, the film does little to mend one of the largest

structural flaws in the novel, namely the narrative in its latter half of Mark's rescue by NASA. Not content with the interesting Crusoe-like tale of Mark's solitary life on Mars, Weir and, following him, Scott insist on getting Mark back home. The rescue involves a long, intricate, and thoroughly improbable series of ingenious solutions and brave feats of derring-do. Though nothing here is simply ridiculous in the manner of one of those summer blockbusters in which Will Smith saves the world—Weir's insistence on technical accuracy continues to hold—the way that one lucky long shot after another ultimately forces a happy ending against all probability becomes pretty tiresome. The story could have been much more profound, affecting, and absorbing if Mark had simply to live out his (inevitably pretty short) life on an alien planet: thus truly justifying the title of both book and movie.

The film, like the novel, is also botched in its failure ever to engage (much less to answer) the question of *why* such extensive efforts are being made—at a cost that must run into the hundreds of millions, or even billions, of dollars—to rescue Mark Watney. After all, the US government that funds NASA has never actually behaved as though the saving of a single human life (except, perhaps, that of the President) justifies the expenditure of practically unlimited resources. Nor does the way that Mark's fate seems to command the virtually unanimous obsessive interest of the whole world ring true. The closest historical parallel is the true story of Apollo 13—which did, to be sure, garner some headlines in April 1970 but hardly monopolized the attention of the world. If NASA, in real life, were trying to rescue a stranded astronaut, the unfortunate space traveler would doubtless become a celebrity of sorts—but almost certainly not one on the level of Kim Kardashian or Donald Trump.

*The Martian*, in its earlier scenes, is very much worth watching as the splendidly visualized story of Robinson Crusoe on Mars. If, during the later part of the film, you need to get up to use the restroom, or to smoke a cigarette, or to return a text from the babysitter, you need not worry about what you are missing.