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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, September 2016

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Academe is not immune to the new epidemic of affiliation. Often enough, thinking people choose careers in higher education owing in part to a desire to escape the avalanche of demographic labels—race; class; gender; ethnicity; income; educational level; zip code and associated social status; favorite URLs—that rolls over individuality and buries free thinking. Academe, many hope, provides the last bastion for individual achievement.

The quest for liberty, whether from imposed group identities or mass movements, is, as revolutionaries soon discover, not so easy as expected. Even dissidents want to belong to something. Surprisingly, academic folk prize affiliation more than anyone else. Their affiliation markers are numerous, attach themselves early in professional life, persist, and, through dues, can even be bought. The affiliating mania begins with concern over degree-granting universities—did you take your Ph.D. at Yale or at Bismarck State Cosmetology Institute?—and continues through myriad identifications: with a dissertation director; with the institution at which, largely by luck, one happens to land a job; with a department; with a discipline; with laboratory groups; with collaborators; with editorial boards; and, for the dues-paying, with professional organizations. A person who achieves promotion and tenure is so thoroughly marked—so indelibly tattooed—by affiliations as to be unidentifiable without them. As is known by anyone who has ever been introduced at a conference, speech, or event, affiliations constitute the bulk of one's public identity.

Many of the affiliations in which academic professionals take pride also contribute most directly to the entrapment about which so many colleagues complain. Acquiring affiliation X often precludes obtaining affiliation Y and thereby limits the range of action. Becoming an Assistant Professor in Music History de facto blocks the study of Horticulture, at least for six or seven probationary years. Among the most pernicious and yet most prized affiliations is membership in a department or discipline. Affiliating with any one field of study certainly improves access to discipline-specific resources and creates the cuddly feeling of belonging to a tribe (and thereby being protected from other tribes), but it also sets the new affiliate in tacit distinction from, if not opposition to, the rest of the Republic of Letters. It also prevents affiliates from recognizing that departments and disciplines have almost no power to determine university policy, distribute support funds, or advance a career.

Perhaps the most startling recognition that emerges from prolonged involvement with both administrative and faculty affairs is that many of the inroads into faculty prerogative that have been made by administrations were laid down not by wicked bureaucrats but by affiliation-loving faculty themselves. Deciding that "I am a faculty member" (and not an administrator) or that "I am a Professor of Biology" (and not of Foreign Languages) automatically places an affiliating colleagues in a small corner of the institution and far in the background of the vast landscape of higher education. Such self-identification begins the process by which the right and authority to speak for the community of intellectuals erodes. Sometimes this inadvertent isolationism is inflicted on a young person, as occurs when a mentor or a promotion committee member warns a beginner to show what he or she can do *within* the discipline and not get mixed up in far-reaching initiatives.

Seventeenth-century poet John Donne tells us that "salvation to all that will is nigh." The solution to the affiliation problem is remarkably easy even if unlikely to be deployed by large numbers of colleagues. Because the affiliation mania is endemic and everywhere in academe, the mere act of speaking out on large issues is often so unexpected as to confer enormous power. When colleagues really do talk about big issues, those accustomed to life in silos listen (or sometimes run). When someone says, in a personnel committee meeting, "yes, this person has released plenty of good scholarship, and that is admirable, but what has he or she done to advance the institution of the university?" those with parochial instincts often experience a moment of enlightenment. De-affiliating, declaring oneself what was once called a "public intellectual" rather than an employee in a department, is the greatest of all services.



Kevin Cope

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# Higher Education Headliner



**Zehra (ZeeZee) Zamin**



Zehra Zamin, who goes by ZeeZee, was originally born in Pakistan to parents who highly valued education. In addition, her father, after a distinguished career in the military, became an ambassador. Due to her father's profession and her parents' belief that travel is the best way to overcome a provincial mindset, Zamin saw much of the world before eventually settling in Baton Rouge. She has seen the Serengeti, partially climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, gone inside an actual pyramid in Egypt, and traveled all over Pakistan and parts of Europe. Her travels have made her appreciative of other cultures, as well as multi-lingual. She knows Urdu, Punjabi, French, and English.

This cosmopolitan individual came to the United States due, in a sense, to this dedication to education along with her fealty to her family. Her mother insisted when they went away to college that Zamin and her siblings would remain together and take care of each other if something should happen. So ZeeZee and her sister followed their oldest brother to Mississippi State University in Starkville to study, and, after Exxon Baton Rouge gave a job offer to her brother upon his graduation, Zamin decided to join him in Louisiana's capital city. Having previously earned her Master's in English, ZeeZee decided to go into a Master's program in Education Administration at LSU. She also volunteered at the Middleton Library on the LSU campus and worked with the Friends of the Library. She fell in love with the library atmosphere and decided to pursue one further Master's in Library and Information Science. This led her to seek a job with a radical new online information sharing system: the Louisiana Online University Information System (LOUIS), which had become operational in 1992. She began working with this system in 1993 in the early days of the Internet itself. One of the two original hires, Zamin has been working with this system ever since and has not looked back.

ZeeZee is one of those few fortunate individuals who loves every aspect of her profession. In spite of the quick-paced nature of the work and the same budget woes that plague the higher education system in Louisiana, Zamin would not change a single thing about her job. In fact, she has a way of explaining the importance of the library that even a state legislator could under-

stand: "If the library is not accredited, then the institution is not accredited, and then no sports!" That would mean no football, and that is a very persuasive argument for a university that relies rather heavily on the Tiger Athletic Foundation.

One of the most important functions of LOUIS is leveraging its purchasing power in the realm of procurement, allowing all consortium member libraries in the state to maximize their combined purchasing power. This responsibility falls on Zamin, and she explains that she will negotiate with individual vendors of electronic information in order keep prices low. Of course, LOUIS member institutions also support collective research endeavors and technological development solutions that may not have been possible without the collective power of the system.

Zamin is also an advocate and proponent of Affordable Learning Louisiana, which would move from expensive paper textbooks to electronic textbooks and open source materials. Recently, the Board of Regents approved a proof of concept in which eleven institutions and over fourteen hundred students participated. The results demonstrated that this program saved students \$ 137,640. With TOPS and other state and federally funded financial aid programs disintegrating in the wake of budget cuts, such a savings will be very important to the LSU system's student population.

With public, private, and community college library systems invested in LOUIS, ZeeZee has a great responsibility, and Louisiana could not ask for a more passionate and articulate advocate for continuing the innovation and cooperation that has been part of the consortium from the beginning. A testament to her zealous belief in the crucial necessity of LOUIS in the continuing growth of higher education in Louisiana is her answer when asked what, if given a blank check, she would do to cure some of the problems that ail Louisiana higher education. She replied without a moment's hesitation: "Give it all to LOUIS!"

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman

## GOVERNOR'S BRIEFING: ONE STEP FORWARD AND ONLY ONE STEP BACK

Louisiana long-termers as well as friends of country music know the old refrain about "one step forward and two steps back." In the case of Louisiana higher education, the discovery of new funding from tuition or from some other outside source often leads to the withdraw of an equal or greater amount from the state appropriation, leaving ambitious institutions worse off than they were at the outset. One area in which slippage routinely occurs has always been engagement with government, where outreach by faculty to legislators is often met with less gratitude than platitudes and where to assertive a strategy can trigger a backlash. New governor John Bel Edwards has taken steps toward steps: toward avoiding the conversion of steps forward into steps backward. Beginning in June, Edwards's media staff began sending invitations to faculty to appear at briefings and hearings by way of showing public as well as professorial support for higher education and its funding. Unfortunately, Edwards's invitations usually arrived less than twenty-four hours prior to the event, which minimized the response to them—hence, one step forward and one step back. Nevertheless, the neutral position is better than the reverse, and may signal an eventual turn toward "drive."





## KING BREAKS INTO THE ONE PERCENT

Readers of academe's favorite gossip and commentary rag, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, were recently heartened to discover that Louisiana can still please both the left and the right, both the old Occupy Movement and older Mitt Romney, by getting out of the no-account 47% and slipping into the 1%, even amidst a huge financial crisis. Come late July, *The Chronicle* released a survey of administrative salaries that showed LSU President King Alexander squeaking into the bottom end of the top fifty wage earners in the academic CEO cadre. Of course, as our own *Advocate* pointed out, the addition of housing, car, club, and ticket allowances may have vaulted Alexander out of the pits of the most prosperous list and somewhere into the happy middle, although the buggy parked in the number-one post position in front of the LSU System Building doesn't quite look like it requires the payment that the aforementioned car allowance would subsidize (gone are the days when, to the pleasure of World War II reenactors, the presidential parking spot featured a super jeep worthy of General Montgomery—or maybe General Rommel!).



## RALLO EDITORIALIZES, ESCAPES CLAIBORNE SECLUSION

For years if not for decades, the Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education remained behind the curtains even in the glass-encased Claiborne Building in which the Board of Regents does whatever it might be doing. When powerful, Commissioners preferred to work behind the scenes; when tamped down by strong governors or belligerent legislators, Commissioners thought it wisest to remain out of view. One Commissioner even went so far as to install drapes to exclude the last bit of light that streams into the riverside Regents' palace! This sometimes bizarre habit of seclusion has now been reversed by outgoing Commissioner Joseph C. Rallo, who, with a mixture of derring-do and political savvy, cautiously and yet dramatically editorialized in the July 7<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Advocate*, the Baton Rouge morning newspaper. Citing Charles Dickens with respect to the best and the worst of times, the literary former Colonel drew on his military experience, chiding the people of Louisiana for falling back from the Air Force mandate to "do the mission and take care of your people." Although Rallo made the predictable economic arguments about higher education—the old saw about higher education leading to higher salaries, as if a big bank account were the highest good—he nevertheless also raised the question of the "public purpose" (dare he say "the public good") that is best served by an educated citizenry. Congratulations to Commissioner Rallo for throwing off the shackles and, flying out the windows of downtown's most obscure office building, soaring into new heights of public debate!



## KOUBEK KICK-STARTS STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH STADIUM SENDOFF

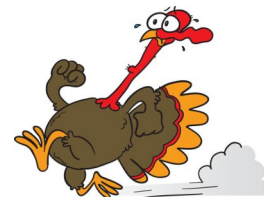
Never short on dramaturgical prowess and always abundant in excellent intentions, LSU A&M Provost and Executive Vice-President Richard Koubek kick-started the new and long overdue LSU strategic planning revision with a day-long workshop and brainstorming session. This legendary engineer, motorcyclist, and academic innovator set the stage for great developments by positioning the "planning retreat" in the club room of LSU's answer to the field of dreams, Alex Box Stadium. As the rising sun glistened through the windows, Koubek launched a series of eight-colleague discussions on almost every topic pertinent to the success of higher education, whether promoting globalism or nurturing innovation or advancing the arts. Fueled by provisions from celebrity chef Don Bergeron, the conferees generated dozens of pages of suggestions, all of which were recorded by the nimble typing fingers of Office of Academic Affairs helpers and all of which are being process by the OAA meta-analysis team. Cheers and ovations are due to Koubek and his team for creating a workshop that, as the coaches say, "manufactured victory" by hammering out helpful ideas while also boosting morale.



Koubek opens at the field of dreams

## MICHIGAN FACULTY UNION SETS EXAMPLE REGARDING OUTSOURCED DINING

One of the most peculiar features of Louisiana higher education is the combined emphasis on local culinary culture—consider the lavish [John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University](#)—and simultaneous obsession with the outsourcing of dining services. One by one, Louisiana campuses have given up on local chefs and entrepreneurs and have surrendered their food service systems either to large national or even global corporations or to an assortment of junk food franchisers. Now members of the Eastern Michigan University All Union Council, which includes the faculty union, have set an example for advocates for local cooking by attacking an administrative proposal to privatize food service at the EMU campus. This union council has developed a [petition](#) that points out both the questionable sanitary practices of large-scale providers and the injustice of excluding faculty, students, and workers from planning for a savory future. The petition can be signed online—and can, of course, be adapted for use on almost any Louisiana campus.





## 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](mailto:ENCOPE@LSU.EDU).

A.G. will be returning from his sabbatical in time for the October issue of the *Newsletter*.

# LSUNITED

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- Help keep faculty informed of issues that affect them
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- Build a stronger, better LSU academic community

Contact Mike Russo: [6923louis@gmail.com](mailto:6923louis@gmail.com)  
Membership Fee: \$10



**The Farmer's Market Returns to LSU!**  
**Every Wednesday from September 7 - October 26, 2016**  
**10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**  
**Free Speech Alley in front of LSU Student Union Theater**



LSU Dining invites all students, faculty & staff to come out and grab a cornucopia of delicious produce while enjoying this fun, sustainable, and nutrition filled event! The Farmer's Market, held in Free Speech Alley, in front of the LSU Student Union Theater, will offer a bountiful harvest of fresh, local fruits and vegetables available for purchase. In the event of rain, the Farmer's Market will be moved into the first floor lobby of the LSU Student Union Theater. The event is free & everyone is welcome!





## SHERMAN STARTS LARGE-SCALE FINANCE PROBE

Blogger, activist, librarian, and professor Dayne Sherman has launched yet another eye-opening project. To date, one of the most mysterious phenomena in Louisiana has been the obscure process by which the Board of Regents apportions the total state higher education budget to the three dozen campuses in our state. Allegedly guided by a multiplicity of formulae and shibboleths—the old formula; the new formula; partially funded versions of these other formulae; notions about the respective missions of the many campuses—the Regents or, more likely, the Commissioner's staff determine the division of state resources with very little outside input and with almost no resistance from the systems, which seem to regard lying low as the best way to ensure a good outcome. Now Dayne Sherman is preparing to rend the veil on these mysteries. On July 14<sup>th</sup>—no less than Bastille Day—Sherman filed a public records request for historical data regarding budgets and budget adjustments for Louisiana institutions. The entire *Newsletter* staff wishes good luck and happy analyses to Dayne as he embarks on what is sure to be one of the most revealing studies in the history of Louisiana higher education.



Dayne Sherman launches new investigation

## FROM HALF-BAKED TO THREE-QUARTER BAKED: SEC LIBRARY PROGRAM SCORES TRIPLE

Regular readers of the *Newsletter* have read reports about the criticism-insulated programs of the “SEC University,” a somewhat amorphous entity bruited as the academic wing of the Southeastern Conference, one of the richest sports leagues in the world. In the past, the SEC has sponsored an assortment of award programs that tend as much to serve its purposes as to instigate diversity of opinion. In August, the SEC moved from half-baked to three-quarter baked ideas—from, as it were, hitting a double to hitting a triple (but not a home run)—with the brokering of a pact among libraries in SEC schools. The new agreement allows members at all SEC schools to enjoy free access to print and digital resources at other institutions and to access unique collections available at each institution. Full details are available [online](#). Like a pole vaulter who passes the pylons but knocks off the bar, the SEC also falls a bit short on this move, for it neglects those many non-SEC universities (and their allied libraries) around the states that contribute to the collective educational project, that produce transfer students (including many who find their way onto the Division One field of play), and that get little support from costly minor sports programs on small campuses. Why not share some of that vast SEC wealth with the library at McNeese?



SECU makes a bit of progress with new library pact

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## CHARTWELLS LAUNCHES AMBITIOUS LSU REVAMP

When it comes to “the blame game,” there is always plenty of guilt to go around. The highly variable quality of dining on Louisiana campuses is easily enough attributed to chicanery on the part of providers such as multinational mega-caterer Chartwells. Often enough, however, investigators discover that the reason for under-performance by outside vendors is the miserly selection by penny-pinching administrators of the cheapest possible programs. A silver lining for empty campus pockets has now appeared in the person of Ben Southard, the new Chartwells envoy to the LSU A&M campus. Southard, recognizing that LSU is launching a new vision-mission-strategic plan, has developed an ambitious new program of upgrades to campus facilities along with a revamp of menus, restaurant concepts, and division of labor among food service personnel. The Southard plan includes pop-up dining opportunities; food-driven interactions with struggling communities on the university perimeter; a year-round high-concept restaurant within Tiger Stadium; a dining-and-entertainment venue; and a dozen other innovations. Let us hope that Southard's ideas garner momentum and spread throughout all our Louisiana campuses.



## DARDENNE HEADLINES ALEXANDRIA SUMMIT

The precedent-setting Alexandria Summit Meeting series, which draws together faculty from all campuses and all systems who are committed to good governance of colleges and universities, reached a new apogee in its ever-enlarging orbit when, at its September 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, it hosted as its plenary speaker Jay Dardenne, Commissioner of Administration for the State of Louisiana. The highest-ranking public official ever to address the Alexandria conferees, Dardenne unfurled long, careful answers to conferees' complex questions while also attracting media attention to Louisiana's premier faculty governance event. Focusing on the budget, Dardenne cautioned that upcoming shortfalls might exceed expectations by as much as \$100,000,000.00 while also fiercely criticizing the "smoke and mirrors" economic practices of the preceding Jindal regime. Dardenne won friends among the conferees by repeatedly stressing the pro-education stance of the Edwards administration and by admitting that both past experience and the temperament of the legislature suggested that closing or merging of campuses was improbable. After ninety minutes of withering questioning, Dardenne concluded his visit by receiving an invitation for a return appearance.



Jay Dardenne addresses Alexandria conferees

The high and the mighty were not the only marquee presenters at the autumn Alexandria meeting. McNeese State University philosopher Matthew Butkus astounded colleagues with the results of a faculty status survey showing that more than half of the McNeese faculty aspired to find another job, that morale had sunk to new lows, and that faith in the ability of Louisiana to solve the problems of higher education had ebbed. Following a delicious lunch, newcomer Joslin Pickens solicited assistance with her doctoral dissertation, which examines the achievements of faculty governance. LSUS chemist and environmental activist Brian Salvatore led an hour-long discussion that explored the paradoxical relation between calls for expansion of campuses—for the construction of ever more buildings (and stadia)—and the retreat into the placeless, dimensionless electronic world of online education. LSUA English Professor Bernard Gallagher provided the climax to an already high-flying event with a witty as well as somber evaluation of the place of the humanities in small-to-medium-sized campuses and in the midst of relentless calls for vocational education. Gallagher enlightened and delighted everyone while also revealing startling statistic about poverty in central Louisiana and about the relation of impoverishment to higher education.

The next Alexandria Summit meeting, which will feature Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph C. Rallo as well as a presentation on libraries by Southeastern Louisiana University professor and activist Dayne Sherman, is slated for December 3. Be there or be square!



Alexandria conferees debate educational issues while media look on

## ALFS UNVEILS NEW LISTSERV

For many years, the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates (ALFS) has released its announcements in the old-fashioned way, through long address lists that often filled an entire page of a printed email and that often triggered spam catchers. Those clumsy days have now retreated into antiquity with the advent of the ALFS-ALEXANDRIA-SUMMIT listserv. Members and friends of both ALFS and of the Alexandria Summit network can now receive clutter-free and reliably delivered announcements and can also do so in a more secure, private way, without the exposure of hundreds of email addresses. After an initial outburst of growing pains in which members received too many subscribe, remove, and address update letters, the listserv is now functioning ably and smoothly, in most cases bringing everyone one to two releases per day from ALFS President Jim Robinson's news-line. Kudos are due to Zehra Zamin of the LOUIS library catalogue and database network, whose expertise and persistence made the listserv a reality. Presently, an automatic enrollment system is in development, but, for the nonce, those who wish to join the list should write via email to ALFS Vice-President [Kevin L. Cope](#) who will arrange to enroll all applicants on the list.



ALFS inaugurates new listserv

## CREDIT UNION STEPS UP TO PLATE WITH DISASTER RELIEF OFFERS

Ron Moreau, Brian Ainsworth, and the entire Campus Federal Credit Union (CFCU) team have distinguished themselves through their rapid and industrious response to the flooding calamity that, in August, beset much of south Louisiana. In collaboration with the LSU Faculty Senate, CFCU developed a suite of special offers for academic personnel living in the circa twenty parishes that were adversely affected by the heavy rains. Included in the ensemble of offers are convenient and economical signature loans; postponed payments; assistance with and information concerning Small Business Administration aid; and increased loan caps.



Thanks to generous CFCU, no one goes underwater

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

**GEORGE H. DEER DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD** is open to any LSU faculty member who teaches courses for which University College students are enrolled, either the [Center for Freshman Year \(UCFY\)](#) or the [Center for Advising and Counseling \(UCAC\)](#). Nominations should be restricted to persons having taught University College students in three of the past four regular semesters including the semester in which the award is made.

**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TEACHING ASSISTANT AWARD** is given in recognition of outstanding teaching ability and service to students. At the freshman level (1000- and 2000- level courses) teaching assistants make up a significant portion of the instructional program. The nominations are limited to graduate teaching assistants who have an academic or fiscal year appointment.

**Criteria for both awards:** Nominations should be made on the basis of excellence in teaching, genuine interest in students, outstanding relationships with colleagues, and demonstrated leadership in the promotion of improved instructional programs.

**ADVISOR OF THE YEAR AWARD** is based on the national criteria of the [National Academic Advising Association \(NACADA\)](#). The award is designed to honor individuals who are making significant contributions to the improvement of academic advising and to disseminate information about these contributions to other professionals in the field. Only one nominee will be selected. The nominee selected from the campus will become LSU's Advisor of the Year and his/her name will be submitted as LSU's representative for national competition as National Advisor of the Year. Any individual employed as an academic advisor at LSU may be nominated. The nominee need not be a NACADA member.

LSU has a rich history of award-winning counselors and advisors receiving this prestigious national honor, including numerous consecutive wins – Stephanie Erie in 2016, Bridget Robicheaux in 2015, Robbie S. Bowen and Ashley Granger in 2014, Andrea L. Jones in 2013, Annette L. Yancy in 2012, Joyce Wakefield in 2009, Rachel L. Singleton in 2008, and Tim Fields in 2007.

**Criteria:** Nominations will be evaluated on the evidence of effective advising qualities and practices that distinguish the nominee as an outstanding academic advisor.

Complete nomination packets can be found at [www.uc.lsu.edu](http://www.uc.lsu.edu) at Scholarships & Awards, or directly [HERE](#).

Nominations for all awards must be submitted electronically no later Friday, January 6, 2017 to: Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock at [jcraddock@lsu.edu](mailto:jcraddock@lsu.edu).

Since 1933, [LSU University College](#) has served as the portal of entry for students enrolled at LSU. Academic and personal success is the hallmark of a well-rounded student, and University College provides a foundation of support services for students beginning their academic careers at LSU. University College has two enrollment divisions: [The Center for Freshman Year](#) and [The Center for Advising and Counseling](#). Additionally, University College offers retention-specific programs: [Student Support Services](#), [Ronald E. McNair Research Scholars](#), and [Summer Scholars](#). These academic support programs focus on particular student populations and are a significant part of the role and mission of University College.

For more information on LSU University College, visit [www.uc.lsu.edu](http://www.uc.lsu.edu) or follow the conversation at [www.facebook.com/LSU.UniversityCollege](https://www.facebook.com/LSU.UniversityCollege).



Regular readers of the *Newsletter* know that Louisiana public institutions receive outside attention from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), a group that monitors the vast totality of American higher education but that finds more than enough to keep its national staff busy right here in the bayou state. The June 2016 national meeting of the AAUP drew Louisiana into story line after story line, both for better and for worse. At the top of the list of tales was the sad saga of journalism professor Melissa Click, who ran into trouble at the University of Missouri after roughhousing a reporter covering dissident action and who, whether or not deserved, was dismissed without due process—a story in which former LSU Associate Vice-Chancellor and now Missouri Dean David Kurpius found himself unexpectedly embroiled. In internal AAUP action, a regular ten-year redistricting move threatened to move the vast state of Pennsylvania into District V while sending some other southern states into other northern or western districts. The outcome of this proposed redistricting would have been the drowning out of the southern voice by a state with different cultural, institutional, and labor norms. Fortunately, this plan was defeated and then subsequently revised by AAUP Council members and Louisiana professors Linda Carroll and Kevin Cope. Meanwhile, on the convention floor, prominent AAUP leaders unveiled the new report on the abuse of [Title IX](#), a law that initially empowered women and minority groups but that in recent years has provided a legal framework for the dismissal of dissident faculty members. To no one's surprise, the Teresa Buchanan case occupies a prominent position in a report that is already winning awards. On a happier note, newly elected Council member Sonya Hester joined with her Southern University Shreveport colleagues Harolyn Wilson and Joslin Pickens to mount a conference panel on their experiences in the building of faculty senates, the empowerment of women and minority faculty leaders, and in the upgrading of faculty governance. Hester and her colleagues garnered five publication and appearance invitations consequent to their presentation. In the upper board rooms, the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) conducted a series of listening sessions about faculty governance in which events in Louisiana served as discussion topics. And, finally, the AAUP announced a new study on intrusive behavior by politicized management boards, including—you guessed at—Louisiana institutions as planned case studies.



Sonya Hester and colleagues present at the AAUP meeting

## Center for Academic Success

Dear Faculty & Staff Colleagues,

Due to unprecedented events, this semester may be especially stressful for many of our students. The Center for Academic Success (CAS) can help students study and learn more effectively how to reduce academic stress, but we need your help.

Please refer your students to the [CAS](#) and other appropriate resources. Encourage them to go early and often.

We have a variety of services that can make a difference in grades and retention. They include:

- ◆ Tutoring
- ◆ Supplemental Instruction
- ◆ Academic Coaching
- ◆ Strategy Workshops

In addition, [LSU Cares](#), which includes the Academic Intervention Team (AIT), exists to provide timely and appropriate intervention for students facing circumstances that may impede their success.

Find more information on this and other CAS services at [www.LSU.edu/cas](http://www.LSU.edu/cas).

Connect with us on:

The Center for Academic Success offers tutoring, Supplemental Instruction and is available for academic coaching sessions.

Visit [LSU.edu/CAS](http://LSU.edu/CAS) for more information.

# Guest Column

## The Dean's Summer Institute

The Dean's 2016 Summer Institute on the Future of Graduate Studies convened for three intense weeks of study and collaboration during summer intersession under the guidance of Dean Michelle Massé. Twenty-five graduate students and faculty, representing a wide range of disciplines across the university, gathered to theorize and research ways we can improve the quality of graduate education at LSU while also thinking deeply about what graduate education in the twenty-first century should look like. We were honored to host Dr. Leonard Cassuto, Professor of English at Fordham University and author of *The Graduate School Mess: What Caused It and How We Can Fix It* (Harvard UP, 2015), for the opening days of the institute.

The first week was devoted to discussing *The Graduate School Mess*, and we had many insightful conversations with Dr. Cassuto about a wide range of issues pertinent to graduate education. These conversations led to brainstorming sessions focused on the particular topics we would research and discuss over the following two weeks. We ultimately selected nine focus areas: graduate programs, graduate students, admissions and retention, mentoring, pedagogy, interdisciplinarity, diversity, innovation and alternative academic products, and alt-ac and post-graduate issues. A small group, consisting of faculty and graduate students from different disciplines, selected a focus area and guided us through the day's agenda. Morning sessions consisted of presentations and discussions of selected texts to provide theoretical, quantitative, and qualitative background information while the afternoon sessions were devoted entirely to developing action plans related to the day's topic for implementation at LSU.

While the Summer Institute ended in June, the real work has just begun. Several working groups have been formed, and the planning and research stage of short-term and long-term programs is in progress. For example, one group will draft the proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities, recognizing the innovative and collaborative digital work already happening across our campus and in the [Digital Scholarship Lab](#). In the short term, we are working with multiple centers and groups on campus to better publicize and utilize existing resources for graduate students, which includes a newly designed Graduate School website. What will be most immediately accessible for students, however, are mentoring initiatives such as workshops to support professionalization at key milestones in one's graduate career, as well as a voluntary university-wide mentoring initiatives for new students.

You can read Dr. Cassuto's perspective on his visit in his *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, ["We Keep talking in Separate Rooms."](#)

—By Stacey Amo  
PhD Candidate in English  
Program Research Assistant  
The Graduate School  
Louisiana State University



Back Row, L-R: Vince LiCata, David Robison-Morris, Mileva Radonjic, Michael Von Cannon, Elias Goldstein, Andrew Sluyter, Michael Lane, Roland Mitchell, Rachel Aker, Victoria Harrington-Burns, Associate Dean Sean Lane, Austin Allen  
Front Row, L-R: Xu Zhou, Charla Hughes, Shannon Walsh, Jodi Boutte, Krystie Nguyen, Dean Michelle Massé, Stacey Amo, Jennifer Piscitello, David Spivak, Jane Opiri  
Not pictured: Solimar Otero

## SEPTEMBER LSU BOARD MEETING SPEEDS UP SHAKING OF HEADS

Old-timers will remember those bobble-head dolls that stood behind the rear seats of spacious automobiles and that, from their perch on the rear window sill, continuously shook their heads at following motorists, all while rolling down that same old road. Such an animation of nonstop bewilderment would have suited the persistently stationary environment of the LSU Board of Supervisors meeting, which, this past September, set more than a few heads bobbing, whether in somnolent boredom or in amused disbelief or maybe just in dazzled confusion. Consider how that dramatic performance which is the semi-monthly Board of Supervisors meeting was staged: More time was spent debating the contract for concessions in athletic stadia—on the respective merit of various vendors' wieners—than on discussion of the hospital debacle, that multi-million-dollar calamity that arose from a blank contract issued to someone who was himself on the Board; LSUS Chancellor Larry Clark, a truly fine leader, felt obliged to justify his request for a world-class diversity and internationalization effort in terms of its favorable impact on the weightlifting program; King Alexander was left to wander among the plebes for fifty minutes while the Board conducted its top-secret review; meanwhile, the Board deferred action on its contract enhancement for Les Miles while undercutting its own credibility through the spinning of stories about proper "timing" for dealing with a coach who was clearly falling out of favor. Is there anyone out there who knows how to revise, organize, and upgrade agendas?





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**Chris Barrett, PhD**  
assistant professor,  
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**Matthew Johnson**  
Biological Sciences

**Maheshi Dassanyake, PhD**  
assistant professor,  
LSU Dept. of Biological Sciences

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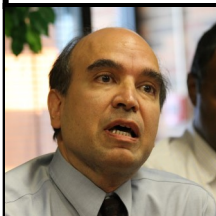
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## LSUS ACTIVIST SALVATORE APPOINTED TO AAUP CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

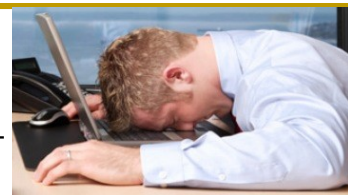


Brian Salvatore becomes charter member of AAUP blue-ribbon panel

One of the most important as well as controversial initiatives of the June 2016 annual meeting of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was the creation of a new blue-ribbon Committee on Climate Change. The purpose of the committee is the evaluation of university policy and behavior with respect to all matters ecological, whether recycling; green energy production; impact on climate change; or policies governing any of the foregoing. Additionally, the committee will consider the ways in which universities may encourage free and honest research into climate change in a time when both government and private industry subsidize and meddle with university activities. Louisianians who are frustrated with the lack of environmentalist commitment in our higher education institutions may take heart in the selection of LSUS Chemistry Department Chair Brian Salvatore's appointment as a charter member of this committee. Brian's duties begin immediately; thanks, Brian!

## RETIREMENT LEGISLATION: SOME FRIENDS BUT FEW RESULTS

After no less than three legislative sessions this year, participants in Louisiana's retirement systems have a few reasons for pleasure but many more reasons for frustration. The good news: A few state legislators, most notably Representatives Pearson and Ivey with occasional concurrence from Senator Peacock, have managed to set aside ideological biases and advance legislation helpful to Louisiana higher educators. That much is a major triumph, especially considering the conservative alignments of at least legislators Peacock and Pearson. The bad news is that almost none of this legislation passed or gained the required gubernatorial signature. Measures calling for training for the boards of trustees of retirement systems; for the selection of qualified auditors; for improved public records access; for proper auditing of the unfunded accrued liability; for increased employer contributions; and, most important of all, for the right to rejoin the defined benefit plan (the "TRSL," traditional retirement scheme) all went down in flames. Nevertheless, educators may find some gratification in the increasing sympathy among even conservative legislators with respect to the shortcomings of retirement plans for those professionals who are so necessary to the solving of Louisiana's problems.



## ALIEN MEGASTRUCTURE FLAP RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT LSU KNOWS

Those among us who believe that there are those among us—who fancy it absurd to imagine that human beings, with their obsession over football and their purchasing of Bayou Country Superfest tickets, are the only sentient products that this big universe can devise—took special delight in the summertime controversy over KIC 8462851, the twinkling celestial body affectionately known as “Tabby’s Star.” Said Tabby’s Star varies in brilliance with a regularity and to a degree that stands outside the normal course of nature, prompting LSU astronomer Bradley Schaefer and many others to review archival observation data and conclude that something funny is afoot in the heavens. Schaefer and many supporters unnerved the scientific community by suggesting that the variation in luminosity may suggest the presence of an orbiting structure designed by intelligent beings who harvest energies from their far-away sun. But another question remains to be asked: What secrets concerning extraterrestrials lie hidden in the deep vaults at LSU, an institution that was once headed by a Chancellor with a NASA pedigree and an intelligence background?



A typical commute to the LSU System office

## EAGLE-EYE A.G. SEES AND AVOIDS RETIREMENT SERVICE CHARGES

Those who have studied aviation know that the prime imperative for those operating airplanes is “see and avoid”: keeping an eye out for conflicting traffic and dodging collisions. The art of see-and-avoid has been transferred into the retirement arena by LSU HRM Chief A G Monaco, who has been monitoring service charges on retirement accounts. Those who attended the Faculty Senate sponsored retirement planning seminar provided by Professor Don Chance know that the number-one drain on retirement accrual is the excessive management or service charge, which, year in and year out, can sum up to great costs. A G and his team have been monitoring funds used by retirement plan vendors and have, over the summer, succeeded in replacing some high-cost funds with equivalent but less expensive options. May A G’s example lead to imitators in other higher education systems!



## PROPER AGGRESSION RETURNS TO TOTEMIC TIGER

Academic personnel throughout Louisiana are familiar with the sad story of Mike the Tiger, the LSU mascot who was recently diagnosed with cancer yet who remains on display for the amusement of barbaric tourists and idle ogles. Setting aside the question of the merits and demerits of maintaining a captive live predator in an institution devoted to the production of good citizens and ennobling knowledge, an accompanying issue, that of the presentation of tigers to football fans, can provide insights into the evolution of Louisiana culture. In the early days of tiger mascots, Mike appeared in a whimsical, cartoon-like illustration, often wearing a comical sailor’s hat. Later, the Mike image turned aggressive, with long fangs and a snarling grimace striking terror into football rivals. During the time of spin doctor Michael Ruffner, Sean O’Keefe’s media man, Mike became kinder and gentler, as if he wanted nothing more than to do endorsements for vegetarian ketchup rather than dive into red meat. Now, with the blessing of LSU licensing, Tin Roof Brewery, a favorite vendor of former LSU A&M Chancellor Mike Martin, has re-introduced an aggressive version of Mike, creating a new Mike logo for its “Bayou Bengal Lager” that again introduces the fangs and the hypnotic aggressive stare. Could this mean that anger is building somewhere in the LSU System?



Tin roof Brewery unveils aggressive Mike logo

## PROPAGANDA WAR ROILS SHREVEPORT MEDICAL PROGRAMS

For years, Louisiana educators have thought of the medical campus at Shreveport as a pleasant and somewhat remote institution that trained the kind of nice family doctors who treat friendly patients, day in and day out, without all the internecine broils that characterize most professional schools. That stereotype has now been shattered with the outbreak of a propaganda war. In this conflict, what might be called, per the Afghan War, “The Northern Alliance”—the Biomedical Research Foundations and its allies—has taken out full-page advertisements in major metropolitan news-LSU officialdom for inadequately funding the that replaced the old state charity hospital synergistic losses being incurred by a school that non-undergraduate institution—a whopping with the consequences of a contract that con- than specifics. The advertisements, which demonize the LSU aristocracy, drew the predictable round of counter-demonizing denials from the Lakeshore media battalion. What is forgotten amidst these polarizing accusations is that the lines separating the factions are less than sharply drawn. Biomedical Research Foundation CEO John F. George was a favorite among the LSU Supervisors when this deal with forces not quite sublime enough to qualify as devils was struck; George, a great evangelist for the neo-conservative gospel of privatization, was party to the creation of the calamity that he now calumniates. The LSU Board, meanwhile, scourged those who criticized the now crumbling arrangement and took shelter from media probes into an insider deal. Perhaps a bit of honest blame-sharing might be in order?

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE \$200 MILLION LOSS AT THE LSU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE?

BRF-LSU propaganda war rips medical community

papers, all by way of lambasting bizarre public-private partnership tem. The controversy turns on the has sustained the largest cut to a \$29,000,000.00—while dealing tainted more blanks and options





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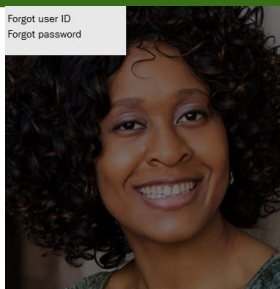
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## LSU FS EXCOMM MEMBER LAUNCHES PROBE OF RETIREMENT VENDOR SERVICE

Faculty members statewide have long complained about the poor service provided by retirement plan vendors. Unregulated by TRSL, the state retirement manager, VALIC, TIAA-CREF, ING-VOYA, and their various predecessors have persistently followed the low road, deploying their very few agents across vast regions—sometimes across the entire state—and seldom providing true experts who can recommend anything other than their own expensive, unproved, proprietary investment software. LSU Faculty Senate Executive Committee member Lillian Bridwell-Bowles recently decided to test the level of service provided by financial megafirm TIAA-CREF, which, among other things, ornaments its advertisements and web pages with images of senior professionals deliriously smiling in joy over the fine service that this vendor allegedly provides. Bridwell-Bowles attempted to make an appointment with a TIAA-CREF agent only to discover that the next available opportunity would arise in more than two months! Upon quizzing a TIAA-CREF representative via email, Bridwell-Bowles was informed that the “real demand” at “some campuses” was not sufficient to justify more frequent service visits. Bridwell-Bowles was told to make use of online software or to schedule a “one-hour telephone interview” with, presumably, a call center voice. Although it is tempting to blast the retirement vendors for a deplorable situation in which a multi-million-dollar retirement program earns only bimonthly visits, much of the blame abides with state retirement manager TRSL, which refuses to provide help of any kind to participants in the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP), even while charging commissions to service ORP accounts and even while regulating that troubled plan.

Forgot user ID  
Forgot password



The smiling faces on the TIAA-CREF web site diverge from the countenances on Louisiana campuses

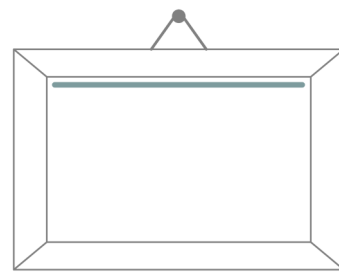
## GRAMBLING PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH DIVERGES FROM DEMOCRACY

2016 is one of those years in which, owing to the presidential election, the nature, function, and merit of democracy all come to our attention. How sad it is that, during the summer of hard-fought campaigns and clamorous conventions, the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors set a perverse example of colonialism by centralizing command and control over the search for the umpteenth new President of troubled Grambling University. Ignoring nationwide calls for the [study](#) by qualified consultants of Grambling and its management, the UL Board conducted an off-premises review of candidates in Baton Rouge and ended up appointing, against objections from the Grambling faculty, a former member of the Louisiana State Legislature and career politician with questionable academic credentials. So much for setting an example of advancement by merit for the minority community.



## LEGISLATIVE CAP ON PUBLIC ART STRIPS ACADEMIC BUILDINGS

Throughout Louisiana, academic buildings draw derision owing to their starkness: their heartless lack of ornamentation. Visitors to LSU's new agriculture building, for example, continue to see blank placards where architects planned to install relief emblems; those passing through LSU in Eunice will see former Chancellor William Nunez's ornamental Victorian street clock but will look long and hard for any artifacts of recent limning. A recent decision by the legislature to cap the extant requirement that one percent of building budgets be dedicated to public art and that campuses favor low-cost student works makes improvement unlikely and ensures that faded reprints of Audubon pelican prints will continue as the most recent artistic expressions on Louisiana campuses.



## WORKDAY TRAINING GOES SRO, SPAWNS SEQUEL

Denizens of both the LSU A&M campus and the LSU System campuses have been wringing their hands over the implementation of Workday, the new high-tech business enterprise system that was expected to accelerate and ease most (former) paperwork operations, whether purchasing or travel approval or application for leave time. Sad to say, the idea of presenting a community of occasional amateur users such as the ever-distracted faculty with a system designed for those deeply versed in modern office management lore didn't quite work out as planned. Fortunately, Donna Torres and her team in LSU Accounting Services offered to partner with the LSU Faculty Senate in the presentation of *Workday Training for Faculty*, a live workshop intended to provide faculty members with the skills to accomplish the most basic and common tasks that now abide in the Workday environment. A full house received two hours of intense training at the LSU Student Union. The event generated so much interest that a set of sequel drop-in labs have now been scheduled for October 26<sup>th</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> by way of reinforcing the skills that mainline faculty members need.

We can say at least one nice thing about Workday, and that is that its Easter-egg color scheme provides a pleasant relief from the realms of purple-and-gold web pages that roll off the LSU web sites! For information on the drop-in workshops, please see the advertisement elsewhere in this newsletter.



Workday training session draws capacity crowd

# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

## ROOM (Lenny Abrahamson, 2015)

—Reviewed by Carl Freedman

As I have commented before in this space, Ireland is today the site of some of the most interesting and excellent cinema being produced anywhere. In a way, this should not be surprising, since this small—and usually impoverished— island nation has, almost inexplicably, been for well over a century one of the world's cultural powerhouses. The Irish filmmakers currently at work are heirs, as they generally seem quite consciously aware, to a tradition that includes poets like Yeats and Seamus Heaney, novelists like Joyce and Flann O'Brien, and—in certain respects most pertinently—playwrights like Wilde, Shaw, John Millington Synge, Sean O'Casey, and Samuel Beckett. Early last year I reviewed John Michael McDonagh's *Calvary* (2014), one of the assured masterworks of current Irish cinema and also one of the relatively few great films to engage religious ideas seriously since the days of Robert Bresson and Andrei Tarkovsky. The movie under review here is nearly (if not quite) on the same level in terms of quality. Lenny Abrahamson is another of Ireland's most prominent filmmakers. A rigorous intellectual in a way that by no means all creative artists are—he studied both philosophy and physics at the university level—Abrahamson is unfailingly intelligent and conceptually adventurous in his work. If sometimes his previous films—for instance, *Frank* (2014)—seem to me interesting projects that are not executed with complete success, in *Room* he approaches something not too far from cinematic perfection. Though the film is set in North America (exactly where is never clear), its sensibility is in many ways Irish.

The backstory of *Room* concerns a horrendous crime. About seven years prior to the time present of the film, Joy Newsome (Brie Larson in a brilliant career-making performance) was evidently a fairly ordinary high-school girl who happened to be walking home from school one day. A young man in a pickup truck (Sean Bridgers) came by, kidnapped her, and imprisoned her. He shut her up in an eleven-by-eleven-foot garden shed in his backyard that he had outfitted with a bed, a sink, a toilet, a television set, and a few other meager amenities—and with a heavy steel door and a sturdy lock, controlled by a number pad the proper combination of which is known only to him. He has used her for the seven years as a sex slave, repeatedly raping her at will—though he sometimes takes a weird pleasure in addressing her as though she were a somewhat unsatisfactory wife or girlfriend (he once chides her for displaying insufficient gratitude for the far from luxurious groceries he provides). In due course the kidnapper-rapist (we never learn his actual name, but Joy refers to him as Old Nick, presumably after the Devil) impregnated Joy, and a son, Jack (Jacob Tremblay, one of the most impressive child actors of recent years), was born.

We are meant to be sensitive to the way that Jack's birth radically changed the moral significance of Joy's situation. On her own, she was justified in doing anything at all in order to escape; and she may well have felt that to die trying would be preferable to continuing to live in circumstances that combine two of the worst things that can happen to anyone, confinement and rape. But it is quite otherwise after Jack is born. Not only does she have an absolute obligation to tend to his physical needs as best she can, but she must also try to make their life together as pleasant, or at least as tolerable, as possible. After all, Room (as Joy and Jack refer to the interior of the shed) is the only environment, the only home, that Jack has ever known; and he is living through the only childhood he will ever have.

This, then, is the first conceptual moment of the film: the construction of the lifeworld of Room as seen from the double perspective of Joy and of Jack. For Joy, of course, Room is utter horror, not only because of present travails but also because of her never voiced but clearly harbored fear that Old Nick will sooner or later put an end to his atrocious experiment by murdering her and Jack. It is, indeed, a little difficult to imagine anything else he could ultimately have in mind. When Jack is asleep, the camera catches

Joy's face full of unspeakable anguish. For Jack, however, Room is not so bad: he has, of course, nothing with which to compare it. The film begins on his fifth birthday, and he enjoys celebrating the occasion with his mother much as any child might. Indeed, despite the extraordinary circumstances of his young life, Jack for the most part seems like a pretty normal five-year-old: bright, curious, imaginative, high-spirited, energetic, and quick to anger or to tears but also quick to recover from them. Sometimes the double perspective from which Room is seen is almost unbearably significant. Joy entertains Jack by telling him stories and singing him songs. One of the former is based on *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Alexandre Dumas's novel about unjust imprisonment and revenge that must be meaningful for Joy in a way it cannot be for Jack; one of the latter is "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," a hobo's song about a utopia of perfect freedom, ease, and plenty. Joy teaches Jack to read with a copy of *Alice in Wonderland* that happens to be lying around the shed. Jack has formed the notion—partly from Joy's indications but also, it seems, partly from his own creative powers—that Room is the entirety of the ordinary material universe but that there also exists another, magical realm accessible through television programs. Though the film does not press the point, there are metaphysical implications here that should not be ignored. Jack's understanding of Room is perfectly reasonable given the data he has at his disposal. Might there exist some transcendent realm from whose coign of vantage our own universe seems as tiny and cramped as Room does to us? The religious dimension sometimes found in current Irish cinema is faintly but intriguingly detectable. (It may be worth noting that, while Abrahamson considers himself a firm atheist, Emma Donoghue—his Irish-Canadian screenwriter and the author of the acclaimed novel on which the screenplay is based—is a religious believer.)

The second great moment of the film is more ordinary but quite well executed: the moment of escape. Joy has raised Jack with a staggering degree of love, resourcefulness, and courage. On the occasion of his turning five, she decides to tell him the truth of their situation—or more of the truth than she has ever told before—and to enlist his help in a plan to free them both. First, she convinces Nick that Jack is sick with a high fever, and asks him to take the child to an emergency room (where, of course, Jack could seek help, delivering to the authorities a note she has written). But Nick refuses, and so she improvises an alternate plan. When Nick returns to Room, she tells him that Jack has worsened and died; and she asks him to dispose respectfully of the "corpse" that she has rolled up inside a rug. This time Nick agrees, and he puts the quite alive, healthy, and motionless Jack, with the rug wrapped around him, into the back of his pickup truck. As the truck rolls along, Jack wiggles out of the rug, and there is a wonderful shot of him lying on his back and seeing for the first time such ordinary sights as trees, bridges, and power lines—not to mention the sky itself, which he has previously glimpsed only through a skylight in the shed. Following his mother's instructions, Jack jumps out at a stop sign. The startled Nick tries to retrieve him, but, as luck would have it, a passerby walking his dog sees that something is wrong and says that he is going to call the police. Nick flees, and the police arrive. A black female officer (Amanda Brugel) takes a special interest in Jack, and—despite Jack's understandably very limited ability to convey useful information—manages some shrewd detective work that has the shed located and Joy freed within minutes. Nick is captured and arrested not long thereafter. Though the film rightly declines to interest itself very much in the kidnapper or his fate, it seems fair to assume that a lengthy prison term awaits him—the prisoner imprisoned.



—Continued on page 19



# **WORKDAY EXPENSES DROP-IN PRACTICE LAB FOR FACULTY**

Faculty are invited to the **Workday Expenses Drop-In Practice Lab** for one-on-one assistance. These labs are designed to answer questions related to the **Spend Authorization** and/or **Expense Reports** after reviewing online training materials and/or attending Instructor Led training. Please come prepared with specific questions to be addressed during this time.

\*\*This is not a lecture, or structured training class. The practice labs serve as an opportunity to assist you with any specific questions.



## **Where & When:**

Wednesday, October 26  
9:30 – 11:30am  
169 Coates

Tuesday, November 1  
1:30 – 3:30pm  
230E Middleton



## KING: UPWARD AND OUTWARD BOUND?

Those who watch the top brass at the state system offices took note of King Alexander's timely call, in an op-ed for the *Washington Post*, for federal-state partnerships in the rendering of higher education affordable for all. At the very moment when poll numbers for Hillary Clinton began moving upward, the cagey higher education CEO observed, in his editorial, that his "concept already serves as the linchpin of Hillary Clinton's New College Compact" while quietly bypassing losing Bernie Sanders's more foundational ideas on the same theme. What, we wonder, does the future hold for the Lakeshore opinionator?



## MEDICAL MARIJUANA AND POLICY PARADOXES AT LSU AND SOUTHERN

Out of all the ways in which LSU and Southern University, which still suffer from a long history of segregation, could come together, the most improbable surely would have been their new joint responsibility for growing medical marijuana. Setting aside the discovery of this unlikely conjunction of interests, the emergence of LSU and Southern as the new cannabis kingpins of the American south draws attention to a number of policy paradoxes. For example, a student who holds an assistantship in a secure or sensitive or federally- or state-regulated area of research who makes use of the new LSU or Southern product could, if injured on the job and taken to an on-campus infirmary, be subjected to blood testing that would, were cannabis residues discovered, lead to dismissal. Similarly, a faculty member or student assistant who enjoys some Louisiana-grown boutique pot in a liberal state such as Colorado might fly back to Louisiana and succumb to the aforementioned fate, thereby suggesting that Louisiana can regulate behavior outside of its jurisdictions. Those who have seen the marijuana farm at the University of Mississippi, with its guard towers and genuine "stalag" look, might wonder whether the LSU design for the farm will recall Alexander Solzhenitsyn or pay homage to *Hogan's Heroes* or perhaps feature tunnels designed in the El Chapo School of Impromptu Excavation. One way or the other, some policy solution must be found to the problem of ejecting students and faculty for the use of the latest product from Louisiana higher education.



Louisiana higher education emerges as new cannabis kingpin

## TIP OF THE MONTH: BISTRO ITALIA

Lovers of Italian food have had an on-again off-again relationship with the Italian restaurant community. Gino's provides an old-timey ambience worthy of Dean Martin or Mario Lanza, but Gino's food falls into the America category of Italian spinoffs; Monjuni's offers vibrancy and decor but spoils its tomato sauces with too much sugar; the old Oscar's Pizza Joint has gone by the boards; The Little Village presents food influenced as much by tailgating as by Tuscany; and even Nino's remains unpredictable, with a menu that is sometimes classic, sometimes inventive, but somehow never complete. Lovers of casual Italian dining will rejoice in the rise of Bistro Italia way out on Coursey Boulevard. Located in the mall slot once occupied by an early Rotolo's franchise, Bistro Italia has completely erased the ugliness of the commercial thruway on which it sits and has created a delightful, chic urban interior abounding in modern art and yet friendly in overall demeanor. Although it offers a full Italian menu, Bistro Italian excels in salads and pizzas, the two of which fit nicely together. Salads abound in sparkling-fresh vegetables and exquisitely balanced dressings that counterpoint the tart and the savory in bright harmonies. Pizza, meanwhile, evidence the denseness and depth of flavor—as it were, the Italian umami—that signals the use of sophisticated cheeses and artisanal meats. Slightly crispy yet also breadly, the thin crust of the Bistro Italia wood-fired pizzas makes for nonstop pleasure and a heck of a good meal. And don't forget to try the fried ravioli appetizer!



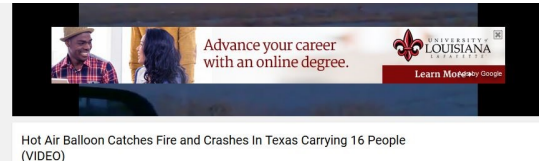
## LSUHSC-NO LEADER LAMOTTE PROBES 9-MONTH APPOINTMENTS

One of the curious features of Louisiana higher education is an irrational inconsistency and dogged stubbornness with regard to the kinds of appointment available to colleagues. On some campuses, all colleagues are paid on a twelve-month schedule whether they are nine- or twelve-month workers; on others, everyone is paid on a nine-month plan; on others, anything goes. Long-term faculty leader Lynn Lamotte has opened the possibility of flexibility by initiating an inquiry into nine-month appointments for those who work on the New Orleans medical campus (LSUHSC-NO). Through a dialogue with Human Resources Management (HRM) at the central LSU A&M campus, Lamotte has already dispelled a bevy of misconceptions, including the strange notion that a change in appointment or pay scale might imperil tenure. Lamotte's investigation remains a work-in-progress, but we wish him well in his quest to improve working conditions for Louisiana professionals by allowing minimal (and cost-free) employment and payment options.



Lynn Lamotte probes 9-month appointment possibility

For many a year now, the online world has, in the imagination of some, held the answer to everything. Need a solution or an answer? Just Google it. Need love? Try an online dating service. Need some money? Advertise your wares online. Unfortunately, matters don't always work out as planned. During the summer, the University of Louisiana in Lafayette (ULL) launched an aggressive program of pop-up advertisements for its online education offerings. *Newsletter* staffers observed a high frequency of advertising on YouTube, the video provider. But those staffers also observed a lack of judgment with regard to where the advertisements appeared. Three examples: atop a video in the midst of the terrifying image of a casualty-ridden perversely, in a video on potty training!



ULL ad in a report on a tragic hot air balloon accident



ULL ad in a video on botched building demolitions



ULL ad in a video on potty training

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A more conventional and less imaginative movie would end at this point, the happy ending of the successful escape at least somewhat redeeming the suffering that Joy has endured. In fact, *Room* is now only half over, and its entire second hour is devoted to the film's third conceptual moment: the moment of Joy and Jack in the world.

We might expect that Joy would be better able than Jack to navigate the world, since she re-enters it having previously had an (almost) adult understanding of it—unlike Jack, whose mind has been formed entirely within, and to some degree by, Room. But a doctor who examines Jack shortly after the escape tells Joy that the best thing she has done for her son is getting him out while he is still “plastic.” The unspoken implication—that Joy herself, who is far beyond the age of plasticity, may have some troubles ahead—gradually becomes concrete. Her parents are now divorced, and she is furious that her father (William H. Macy) refuses to see Jack as his grandson, evidently regarding him only as the child of a rapist. Some of her other resentments are less reasonable, though certainly understandable. Looking at a photograph of herself with three high-school friends (all four were on the school track team), she is bitter that the other girls were able to lead normal lives while she was imprisoned in Room. She is also bitter that her mother (Joan Allen), though clearly devastated for seven years by her daughter's unexplained disappearance, has been able to get on with her life, and now, after the divorce, is living in the house where Joy grew up with a kind male companion, Leo (Tom McCamus), an old family friend. While confined in Room and repeatedly violated by a sociopath, Joy never seriously considered suicide. But now, living freely in a large, comfortable upper-middle-class house, and surrounded by her mother's and Leo's love, as well as by Jack's, she deliberately takes an overdose of pills—an

overdose that might well have been fatal had Jack not discovered his mother unconscious on a bathroom floor.

Jack manages much better. While Joy is deeply traumatized by the violence she endured in the shed, Jack—whose mother shielded him from the worst aspects of Room—actually has a certain mild nostalgia for the place, while at the same time growing increasingly excited by all the new and different things that the world has to offer. If such ordinary items as coloring books and Legos and basketballs are wonderfully thrilling to Jack, he is not, after all, in that respect so very different from most boys his age. Five-year-olds are, as the doctor said, plastic. As Joy spent five years protecting Jack from the horrors around them, Jack—without, of course, quite knowing what he is doing—now rescues Joy from the horrors of the past. She survives her suicide attempt, both physically and psychologically, and the bond of mutual love between mother and child is reconstituted under normal living conditions. For five years, the two had only each other's company to sustain them. If Joy is now capable of a twinge of jealousy when Jack would rather go off and play ball with a neighboring friend his own age, her feelings are, after all, not radically different from those that any parent feels as a child grows more independent. Despite its backstory, *Room* is not, primarily, a crime film; and it is determined to make clear that there is nothing particularly interesting about the sociopathic kidnapper-rapist. Old Nick is, so to speak, no Norman Bates. *Room* is, above all, a love story. The love between parents and children may well be the most common form of love in the real world, but it is treated in cinema with surprising infrequency. Certainly, there are few films that treat it with greater depth and seriousness than *Room*.