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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, December 2016

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Ingenuously positioned in a way that can only be accomplished through centuries of cultural evolution, Christmas occurs near the longest, darkest night of the year so as to suggest that even a small ray of light shines brightest when piercing the gloom. However severe the shortage of light around the yuletide, it never rivals the acute dimness of that social counterpart to night, blacklisting. With the advent of web sites such as [Professor Watch List](#), an organization that stigmatizes dissenting professors and encourages students to reconnoiter them, blacklisting is much in the news these days, and rightly so. Yet honest scholars ought to ask whether the pot ought to accuse the kettle of blacklisting before examining its own practices.

Sensational web sites like the aforementioned practice an obvious, blatant sort of blacklisting—the equivalent of shouting imprecations through a megaphone. Academe offers more delicate ways of identifying those who, in the majority estimate, walk among the damned. Almost every academic professional knows that one colleague in the department or college who has been collectively stereotyped as the guy or gal whose career didn't quite work out or whose glory was of another day and who is now regarded as a necessary liability and test case of the sanctity of tenure. Then there are those colleagues who have fallen into the academic equivalent of a black hole: who, after a period of inactivity, can never produce enough scholarship to make up for the hiatus and who are the targets of knowing nods and grimaces. Still another, less daunted subset of blacklisted persons include those who have taken a controversial pose and who have therefore been designated as the official department/college/institutional dissidents—the go-to persons in the midst of a broil who are never otherwise taken seriously. Blacklisting habits can develop early in careers, as occurs when young members of the profession, in search of mentors and seeking advancement, are subtly steered away from oldsters who, for one reason or another, are too hot for handling. Career advancement is the most common cloak for blacklisting. Often enough, aspiring academics latch on to senior sponsors who, in turn, signal their disciples as to who is “in” and who ought to be “out.” Then there is the scholar who suddenly takes up an unusual interest—one thinks of the late John Mack at Harvard University, who faced persecution after daring to investigate popular belief in alien abduction—and who thereby draws ridicule rather than approbation for daring and curiosity.

One reason that Louisiana universities seldom make progress is the prevalence of blacklisting by the influential. Having qualifications, asking questions, or at least trying to iron the emperor's non-existent clothes are all reasons for exclusion from the power structures that undergird academe. Doing what one ought to do, whether being interdisciplinary (and thereby trespassing over “unit” boundaries) or whether exploring the work rules within the allegedly noble academy, are all reasons to put a glass ceiling in place. A visit to any management board meeting in Louisiana will demonstrate that conventionality is king.

Which brings us around to Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and whatever else might be celebrated during the dismal days. What is the best present that could be given to a colleague? A vocal affirmation that such a person should be removed from the blacklist. Stand up wherever one can stand up—in a department meeting, at a management board meeting, outside the doors of the downtown law firms that do the unseen devilry of universities—and announce that you support blacklist victim A, B, or C. Join your faculty Senate and propose a resolution of commendation for that person who tried to help you. The Star of Bethlehem, after all, was a conjunction of small luminosities, which just shows what influence comes from shedding even a few rays of hope.

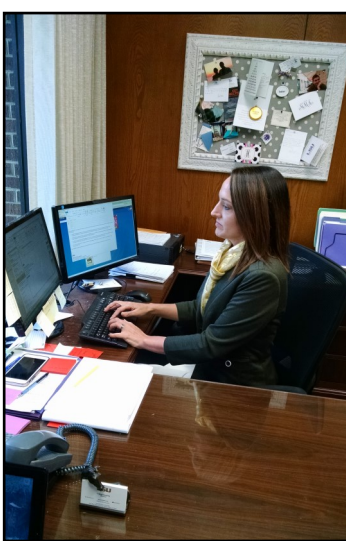


Kevin Cope

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# Higher Education Headliner



Ashley Arceneaux



Ashley Arceneaux, a native of Plaquemine, situated on the West Bank of the Mississippi River about ten miles as the crow flies south-southwest of LSU's Baton Rouge campus, is well aware of the many issues facing the state of Louisiana. Having attended LSU, where she confesses, "I was very much a commuter student," she has a unique perspective; she can speak both from her experience as a student and as an administrator. Her time at LSU in both capacities has instilled in her not just a love of the purple and gold, but a desire to serve others. A role that she took to begin her career at LSU, and which she found very rewarding, was with University Relations. There, she promoted the research of faculty in the sciences, and she also developed Science Café at LSU, which is in its fourth year of existence. In her present job as the Director of Policy Communications for the Office of LSU System President F. King Alexander, Arceneaux has found her niche and is on the cutting edge of media relations, which, increasingly, means social media relations. Very conscious of the fact that LSU is not just a university, but a "brand" that needs constant maintenance, she is very cognizant of the complexities and pitfalls of the ever-expanding area of media relations, and her day to day activities vary as much as those media and the various constituencies involved in running a university do.

Arceneaux, an English major at LSU who went on to earn an MFA in creative writing and documentary film, has put her degree to good use. Collaborating closely with President Alexander, she works with him to compose President Alexander's "Message from the President," as well as other official communications from his office. The process, though, can be quite fluid, but Arceneaux is quick to point out that the words and the content are Alexander's own, and he takes a much more active role in composing the messages, ensuring they truly contain his own thoughts, than other presidents of comparative flagship research institutions. She explains this is because President Alexander, "believes that he is personally responsible for" the students of the LSU system, and wants to connect with them in an "authentic way." For Arceneaux, that authenticity is

one of the most important elements of President Alexander's message, and she is very enthusiastic about the ways in which the president does get involved in student activities. For example, President Alexander is very active in student government, makes it a point to visit student gatherings and club meetings, and is even a faculty advisor for the campus student chapter of the NAACP.

The current climate demands inclusiveness and a focus on student well-being. Such an imperative led the President's office to organize and carry out the "Movement or Moment" diversity symposium. Arceneaux was instrumental in putting together the symposium, which took place on LSU's campus over a two-day period and attracted 1,400 visitors to campus to take part in 25 separate events, including those involving US Congressman Garrett Graves, CNN television personality Don Lemon, and civil rights leader Dr. Norman Francis. The event was organized to start a dialogue about race and social justice within the context of the police shootings and resulting social unrest that occurred across the country and in Baton Rouge over the summer of 2016. Arceneaux related that, "It was now or never."

In addition, Arceneaux has enjoyed a modest role in the Strategic Plan, working on a couple of subcommittees. She believes that people are primed and ready for the implementation of that plan. As for the future, however, she cannot make any predictions. There are suggestions, though, for further topics of discussion at the next symposium, since the "Movement or Moment" event was so successful. Some of the topics under consideration range from voting rights to race to gender. Her job, though, constantly changes, and she has no idea what the future might hold, but she is optimistic about the positive impact that LSU can have on not just the student body, but on the greater Baton Rouge area. Her goal, like many who have found a home at LSU, is to serve her community to the best of her ability.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman

## LSU TWEET BEHAVIOR ACCENTUATES THE NEGATIVE, UNDERESTIMATES JUDGMENT

That good old crooner, Bing Crosby, popularized the idea that "[you've got to accentuate the positive](#)." Surely that is true of universities, the mission of which is to add positive quantities—new and measurable parcels of information—to the treasury of human knowledge. How strange it is, then, that the LSU Athletic Department, under pressure to promote local hero Ed Orgeron to Head Football Coach, should take to "tweeting" about what it will not say or do—what it will not add to the larder of wisdom. In the midst of the coaching controversy, an unnamed authority—characterized only through the vague locution, "statement from #LSU"—went to Donald Trump's favorite social media platform to announce that "we will not comment on this speculation" and that "we" (whoever that "we" might be) would be "focused on our game against Texas A&M." Perhaps the unknown author of this uninformative ejaculation forgot that the "we" of LSU has more to "focus" on than a change of personnel in the Department of Porcine Leather Balloon Transport and that urgently blurting out such (non-) announcements continues the all-too-familiar process of distracting the public from the teaching, research, and service missions of our universities. Since when is refusing to talk a goal of a distinguished institution?

There are a lot of unsubstantiated rumors about LSU's coaching search. We will not comment on this speculation and are currently focused on our game against Texas A&M. There is a process in place for the search, and we will take our time to make sure the best decision is made for the future of the program.



**Shadowy elements in the LSU administration launch disinformation campaign**



## AAUP RESOLUTION: CAMPUSES, COLLEAGUES SHOULD PROTECT ENDANGERED GROUPS

Subsequent to the November presidential election, alarm sirens began roaring in the Washington world in which the National Council of the America Association of University Professors (AAUP) conducts its deliberations. AAUP officials had already compiled a formidable inventory of civil rights offenses that seemingly stemmed from post-election insurgent enthusiasm. In response, the AAUP National Council, which includes Louisiana faculty members Kevin L. Cope, Leslie Bary, and Sonya Hester among its members, unanimously passed a resolution calling on both faculty and administrations to make extra efforts to safeguard endangered groups of all kinds and to reaffirm that academic freedom stands on the foundation of civil behavior. The resolution specifically charges campus leaders with taking action against those who threaten any member of the academic community; to speak out for academic values and to ensure that all groups and ideas may be included in campus discussions; to cooperate with law enforcement while not assisting persecution through such tactics as gathering immigration status information on behalf of agencies (in the absence of a warrant); and to petition President-Elect Trump to reconsider his appointment of Steve Bannon as his chief strategist. The AAUP resolution has been promulgated throughout the country; we await the response and the action plan from Louisiana campus and system administrators.



## SPECIAL MEAL FLAP TRIGGERS CALL FOR FORMS AUDIT

Those who work in the LSU System and who have been following (or perhaps stalked by) the Workday business enterprise system installation have doubtless discovered that this system abounds with kinks, omissions, and booby traps. The latest flap: the discovery that, although Workday will deliver an approval for a "special meal" (in effect, almost any meal served for ceremonial, academic, or administrative reasons), that approval is not valid and will trigger a request for a paper form, the old AS499 approval document, that requests exactly the same information as is entered into Workday. In some cases, the delays that Workday was intended to eliminate become so severe that requests for paper forms appear weeks or months after achievement of what appears to be an approval. Along with several other mishaps, the AS499 upheaval has induced the LSU Faculty Senate to make a formal request for an audit of all forms either within the electronic Workday environment or invoked by Workday from the paper world. The goal of the audit will be the weeding out of redundancy and the halting of unreasonable delayed requests for unnecessary documents. We would say "stand by" were it not for the fact that this idiom has become the unofficial motto of the ever-tardy Workday.

**LSU**

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEAL

Please follow the AS499 Instructions when completing this document.

Even the devil can work miracles, or, the resurrection of form AS499

## LSU FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP CAROUSEL ON HIGH RPM

Those who have lived long enough to remember 78-RPM vinyl records should recognize that quick revolution rates can occur anywhere, whether on the turntable or in contribution data tables. Perhaps the fastest-moving carousel in the esoteric world of academic high finance is the LSU Foundation, which, in the course of one year, constructed a new palace of a building, broke ground on a major development (the Nicholson Gateway), lost its director to a Virginia development agency, and has now acquired a new interim director. Heads were not so much shaking or nodding as whirling when word came down that former gubernatorial Chief of Staff Stephen Moret intended to decamp to the Presidency of the prestigious and economically robust Virginia Economic Development Partnership only weeks after christening the LSU Foundation building and only days after breaking ground on the aforementioned Nicholson project. In fewer than 100 hours after the official announcement of the Moret egress, LSU announced that the scepter of Finance and Administration emperor Daniel Layzell would extend to the big building in the right field of the old Alex Box baseball stadium (there being no donors in oil-saturated Louisiana in the left field, politically sagacious architects opted for the outer reaches of first base, perhaps in the hope that fundraising projects could get at least as far as the first bag). Layzell's part-time migration to the big southern boulevard may signal an effort by the King Alexander regime to rope in the fundraising project, which has slipped rather far outside academic influence.



LSU CFO Dan Layzell to up the academic ante at the Foundation

## COMBO LSUS-SUSLA PRODIGY PICKENS STUDYING FACULTY GOVERNANCE IN LA

One of the hallmarks of legitimacy and influence is the eliciting of studies. When a person, movement, or event draws scholarly attention, audiences assume that the investigated phenomenon enjoys some prominence. The astounding growth in both size and influence of the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates has moved Joslin Pickens of both Southern University Shreveport and LSU in Shreveport to dedicate her doctoral dissertation in the discipline of education to the unexplored topic of faculty governance and the perception thereof, with special reference to the financial crisis of 2008 onward. Pickens, who belongs to the SUSLA faculty and who is competing a dissertation at LSUS, is probing the way in which faculty leaders perceived their role in the aforementioned crisis while also considering the ways in which faculty leaders communicated to their assorted constituencies. Pickens's project bodes fair to become the first of its kind and thereby establish this young scholar as an innovator while the study also draws acclaim to Louisiana's activist faculty.



## FIRST YEAR EXPEIENCE

For the last eight years First Year Experience has continued the tradition created by The Faculty Center over fifteen years ago by hosting The Faculty/Staff Book Group. The Book Group engages faculty and staff across disciplines in discussions of a new book each semester. The Faculty/Staff book group has selected Angela Duckworth's *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* for our Spring 2017 book selection.

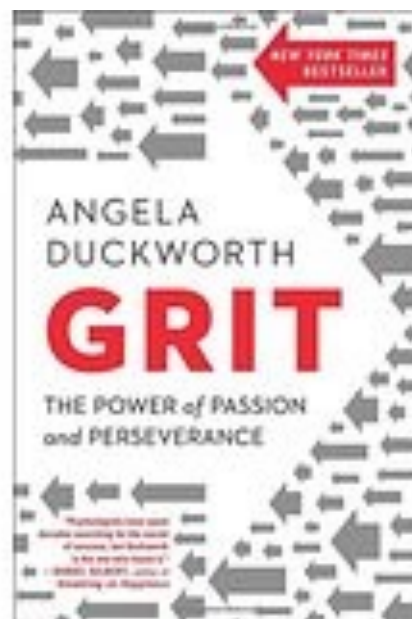
Pioneering psychologist Angela Duckworth shows anyone striving to succeed—be it parents, students, educators, athletes, or business people—that the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence she calls “grit.” Drawing on her own powerful story as the daughter of a scientist who frequently noted her lack of “genius,” Duckworth, now a celebrated researcher and professor, describes her early eye-opening stints in teaching, business consulting, and neuroscience, which led to the hypothesis that what really drives success is not “genius,” but a unique combination of passion and long-term perseverance. In *Grit*, she takes readers into the field to visit cadets struggling through their first days at West Point, teachers working in some of the toughest schools, and young finalists in the National Spelling Bee. She also mines fascinating insights from history and shows what can be gleaned from modern experiments in peak performance. Finally, she shares what she's learned from interviewing dozens of high achievers—from JP Morgan CEO Jamie Dimon to New Yorker cartoon editor Bob Mankoff to Seattle Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll.

The book selection is provided free of charge to faculty and staff who commit to participating. All sessions will be held in 124 Johnston Hall from 12 - 1 p.m. (dates below). Light refreshments will be served and attendees are encouraged to bring bag lunches.

If you would like to sign-up please email Maggi at [mspurl1@lsu.edu](mailto:mspurl1@lsu.edu) so that you can reserve your copy of the book.

February 7 + 8 p. xi–51  
February 21 + 22 p. 53–92  
March 7 + 8 p. 95–142  
March 21 + 22 p. 143–195  
April 4 + 5 p. 199–242  
April 18 + 19 p. 243–277

Maggi Spurlock  
Senior Program Coordinator  
First Year Experience  
Louisiana State University





## A.G.'s Corner

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

### The Letter

Dear A G,

Although holiday is for many people the time of travel, itineracy is for me a year-round condition. I'm one of those rare underpaid and under-appreciated STEM researchers: a biologist with an interest in entomology. My work constantly takes me around the world, to any venue in which, to put it archly, "something might BUG someone." Last year, my university set up a new policy about travel to hazardous places, which set me to thinking. What exactly is my medical and related (e.g., evacuation) coverage when I'm abroad? I'm on the LSU First policy, but I often travel with colleagues from other Louisiana universities who are on the various OGB-managed medical plans. Am I safely under the protection of my medical umbrella when chasing that fire ant in the rainy Brazilian jungle? Is my co-worker, on an OGB plan offered at ULL, going to be in trouble if he is beleaguered by a swarm of killer bees while doing research in the Congo? Do you recommend supplemental travel, evacuation, and medical policies, or are those a waste of money? Thanks for your help!

Yours among the termites,

Abner in Denham Springs



### The Response

Well Abner, the answer to several of your questions is, "It depends."

If we are talking about traveling alone for a project that is a semester or less, I believe health insurance, whether by LSUFirst or the Office of Group Benefits' (OGB) Blue Cross Plans, will generally provide all the protection you need. That is, they are certainly more than adequate to cover the cost of emergency medical attention.

If you choose to work on a lengthy international assignment and you are bringing your entire family, the likelihood that preventive or non-emergency care will be needed is much higher, and the plans are less than adequate. The coverage for "regular or preventive health care" is not as broad internationally as it would be at home. In those cases, some discussion with HRM to see if additional coverage or a substitute coverage can be acquired is a good idea.

Since such long term assignments in which the whole family departs are generally the result of an outside grant or a contract, it is important that you negotiate within that grant or contract the financial or logistical support to provide broader health insurance coverage. Speaking with benefit representatives in HRM when composing a grant submission might help to knowledge about possible insurance expenses.

Also, you should keep in mind that if an accident related to work occurs, the University also covers you through Worker's Compensation insurance and as such would more than likely supersede or augment your regular health insurance. Additionally, job related accidents would shift the cost of corpse repatriation, or emergency medical flights to the employer rather than the employee. I would presume therefore that there would be little difficulty in regard to coverage if the ants attack while studying them. If you need a prescription refill for your blood pressure medication, that might be a different issue. If you have a chronic condition that regularly requires medical treatment of a non-emergency nature, you may wish to supplement your regular health coverage when traveling since the coverage by any plan is likely to be at a reduced "out of network" rate. If the expectation is that only emergency care is likely, you should be well covered regardless of the plan; however, supplemental evacuation or corpse retrieval insurance is rather

inexpensive and generally a rational purchase.

As for me, my international travel this holiday season is likely to be only to Biloxi. While Mississippi is at least as thousand miles away from us culturally, it is safely contained within the health plan.

Below are brief descriptions of the policies of the LSUFirst and OGB plans.

#### LSU First

Expenses for care received outside of the United States or its territories, except for unexpected emergency situations, while traveling, are excluded. For emergent care in other countries, you will need to pay your bill and submit it along with any applicable documentation from the provider to the claim administrator for reimbursement pursuant to applicable Plan provisions. We recommend you pay with a credit card as it will automatically convert the amount paid to U.S. dollars.

#### OGB

Out-of-Area Claims: Non-Network Providers Plan Participant Liability Calculation – Emergency Care If You need Emergency Medical Services in the emergency department of a Hospital, We will cover You at the level required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and federal regulations. You will have to pay for any charges that exceed the Allowable Charge as well as for any Deductibles, Coinsurance, and Copayments.

Emergency services (life and limb threatening emergencies) received outside of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are covered at the Network Benefit level. Non-emergency services received outside of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands with a BlueCard Worldwide provider are covered at the Network Benefit level. Nonemergency services received outside of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands from a non-BlueCard Worldwide Provider ARE COVERED AT THE NON-NETWORK BENEFIT LEVEL.



## SEC OPENS ACADEMIC NIGHTCLUB

Over the last several months, the megabucks-driven athletic entertainment giant, the Southeastern Conference (SEC), has attempted to improve its image as a putative academic enterprise by creating the SEC University (SECU), an advertising-originated entity said to promote learning that nominally resembles an institution of higher learning. Bearing the same relation to education as mascara bears to beauty, SECU sponsors one- or two-day events that attract media attention but that include no follow-up or subsequent financial support. The latest effort to look academic is the recruitment of music students from assorted SEC schools into a composite jazz ensemble that performed at the annual SEC Legends Dinner and the SEC Championship Pregame Hospitality Party. Unpaid for their efforts, the students were accorded the “award” of singing, dancing, and harmonizing for the amusement of well-paid athletes and athletics administrators. The program included no discussion of music history or opportunity to discuss students’ research or innovations. Indeed, the SEC [press release](#) is at pains to assure readers that “for the SEC Football Championship weekend, they [the students] will focus on standard jazz tunes”—that not the slightest bit of innovation, independence, or free expression will occur.



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## LSUS UPSCALING GRADUATE EDUCATION

Perhaps not the biggest but the stinkiest red herring in this state is the strange notion that Louisiana funds too many institutions and that duplication among graduate programs runs rampant in higher education. Falling far short with regard to the provision of an educated workforce and ravaged by failing public schools, Louisiana needs graduate education and its fruits more than just about any other state. Fortunately, LSUS, the comprehensive and right-sized campus in Shreveport, has recognized the centrality of graduate education and has upscaled its efforts, most lately by elevating Sanjay Menon, a wonder-working friend of faculty governance, to the position of Dean of Graduate Studies. Ingeniously productive Menon has taken a tour of Louisiana campuses in a heartfelt and highly laudable effort to develop a more productive, better coordinated, statewide approach to advanced study. Sanjay, may you prosper—and succeed!



Sanjay Menon turbocharges Louisiana graduate education

## SHREVEPORT HEALTH CHANCELLOR COMPENSATION SMASHES RECORDS

In the recent round of cuts, the LSU medical campus in Shreveport (LSUHSC-S) sustained the largest single cut of any public institution despite its legendary productivity, high-profile faculty, and indispensability with respect to the improvement of public health in north Louisiana. Faculty, who have not received raises in years, reeled at the discovery that the new LSUHSC Chancellor would receive a compensation package worth somewhere north of one million per annum. The usual evasive stories about funding from outside the state budget did little to assuage the hurt astonishment of a faculty that is already disoriented from the inadequacy of the Chancellor search process and from the privatization boondoggle—from being caught between the LSU System and the Biomedical Research Foundation that it pretends not to have spawned. Perhaps we can only take a little solace at the introduction of salaries at the level of bigtime sports into academe.



The building is not the only thing towering at LSUHSC Shreveport

## NEWSLETTER NOW PART OF LSU DIGITAL COMMONS!

When the *Newsletter* began, those same nay-sayers who pooh-poohed Noah and his ark sputtered anathemas about an allegedly vain project. Now, nearly seven years and tens of thousands of web-clicks later, the evidence of the pervasive influence and rising legitimacy of this publication is everywhere. The latest feather in the proverbial *Newsletter* cap is the inclusion of all *Newsletter* issues in the new LSU Digital Commons, an avant-garde project concerned with showcasing the best of open-access university innovation. Early adopter and digital genius Gina Costello, a regular contributor to LSU faculty governance, sealed the deal and coordinated the accessioning of the *Newsletter* archive. Appreciatively view Gina’s handiwork (and generous help!) [online](#).

**LSU Digital Commons**

The NEWSLETTER enters the innovative Digital Commons

# Capitol Park Museum Presents

**Lunchtime Lagniappe: Celebrate Baton Rouge's Bicentennial**  
Jan. 11, 2017 at Noon

Baton Rouge turns 200 years old in 2017! The start of the New Year kicks off a yearlong celebration of all things great about our favorite city. We invite you to join us as Melissa Eastin takes a look at some of the upcoming events commemorating Baton Rouge's bicentennial. Melissa will also share insights into resources at the East Baton Rouge Public Library available to those who want to learn more about origins and history of "The Red Stick."

Melissa Eastin graduated from LSU with a Master of Library and Information Science in 2008. She is an active member of Baton Rouge's preservation community, currently serving on the board of Preserve Louisiana (formerly the Foundation for Historical Louisiana) and the Mayor's Bicentennial Committee. She is the Archivist and Head of Special Collections for the East Baton Rouge Parish Library.

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



***Mercy Street*, a Civil War Medical Drama Season Premiere**  
Jan. 19, 2017 at 6 p.m.

Be among the first in the country to get a *look at Season 2* of PBS' praised Civil War-drama *Mercy Street*. Louisiana Public Broadcasting and the Capitol Park Museum invite you to a special screening of this outstanding drama.

Inspired by real people and events, *Mercy Street* goes beyond the front lines of the Civil War and into the chaotic world of the Mansion House Hospital in Union-occupied Alexandria, Virginia. *Mercy Street* takes viewers into the lives of Americans on the Civil War home front as they face the unprecedented challenges of one of the most turbulent times in our nation's history. Previews of other upcoming episodes will be screened as well.

A reception begins at 6 p.m. followed by the screening at 6:30 p.m. The episode will last approximately one hour. Admission is free but seating is limited; please RSVP at 225.767-4274 or [mercystreet@lpb.org](mailto:mercystreet@lpb.org).





## LSU FS TACKLES GAME DAY POLICY

“Game day” at Baton Rouge draws more than a few accolades from visitors and media who happen by the campus at its most spectacular moment, when surrounded by hundreds of thousands of festive fans and when hordes who never attended the institution identify with it to the point of public ecstatic behavior. Those overawed by such moments seldom visit the campus the next day, when the alleged academic and character-building influence of the football culture manifests itself in the form of corrosive urine stains, heaps of rubbish, vandalized property, trampled sacred sites (such as the LSU Indian Mounds), and an overall “trashed” looked.

Inside operatives deep within the repair world have advised *Newsletter* investigators that the Athletic Department pretends that the long-term damage caused by fan abuse results from long-term wear-and-tear rather than from the sporting rites of the football mob and therefore grossly under-funds the restoration costs associated with football (not to mention that, statewide, the \$40,000,000.00 deficit rung up by athletics excludes all the additional costs inflicted on our three dozen campuses).

In response to the growing problem of football-driven campus abuse, the LSU Faculty Senate has partnered with LSU Finance and Administration as well as with the Office of Academic Affairs to begin the formulation of a game-day policy that will address the potentially deleterious, expensive effects of the weekly autumnal siege on the LSU campus. Included in the study will be estimates of the real cost of athletic events; recommendations for the better regulation of fan behavior; and suggestions for the cultivation of a respectful attitude toward the host campus.



## GRATITUDE-CHALLENGED GOVERNOR BLOCKING RAISES BUT MAY RELENT

Those who have studied the surprise victory of John Bel Edwards in the recent race for governor—a phenomenon strangely similar to the electoral upset achieved by Donald Trump, and, remarkably, a turn of events attributable to the very same angry, formerly liberal voters who, one year later, have flipped sides and propelled a right-wing insurgency—early on recognized the central role of the intelligentsia in electing an apparently education-friendly governor. Over the course of the two years during which Edwards sought executive office, faculty members on at least four campuses provided then-candidate Edwards with no less than seven public forums, many of them televised and all of them demonstrating the credibility of this longshot office-seeker. The gratitude that so ardent and extensive a cadre of supporters would expect has apparently flown out the window of the renowned “fourth floor.” Despite hospitable appeals to his lieutenant, Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne, Edwards, as this issue goes to press, continues to block raises for any state employees despite having promised to make every effort to improve faculty compensation and despite money for raises being reserved on several Louisiana campuses. Highly-placed sources report that LSU President King Alexander mounted a full-scale lobbying effort to dissuade the stubborn governor from driving faculty members out of the state. Unfortunately, Edwards continues to hold faculty welfare hostage to image politics, fearing that indulgences for one state agency will irritate his supporters in other branches, including the K–12 cadre of which (holy nepotism, Batman!) his wife is member. The rumor mill has whirled up a report that the governor is at last beginning to relent and that raises may become possible, having noted the depth of faculty outrage and the flight of competent citizens from the state.



## COMMISSIONER DEALS “15 TO FINISH” FROM INNOVATION DECK

In the high-stakes but low payout game that of Louisiana higher education, it appears that Commissioner Joseph C. Rallo is once again dealing from an ace-abundant deck. The latest trick to fly from the Commissioner’s hand is the new “15 to Finish” initiative. For years, the legislature has urged students to complete their degrees within four years while, simultaneously, the TOPS program defined full-time study as twelve hours per semester. Unfortunately, eight times twelve—four years of twelve-hour study—does not sum up to 120, the number of hours required to earn the baccalaureate degree. Now the ever-recruiting former Colonel has enlisted no less than twenty-three institutions into the “15 to Finish” campaign, a presently voluntary program that urges campus counselors to direct students into truly full-time, fifteen-hour enrollment, all with the goal of reaching that magic 120 hours of credit before TOPS bottoms out. Some details have been overlooked, not the least being that some students, obsessed about grade point average prior to admission to professional school, will prefer to take on extra debt, stay in school longer, and proceed at a pace that ensures unrealistically high grades. Nevertheless, we congratulate the Commissioner on both his skill in calculation (which is apparently far more developed than the arithmetical skill of the legislature) and on his showmanship in developing a snazzy title for his latest brainchild.



Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Rallo inaugurates 15 to Finish program

# Lifestyle Feature

## WRAP IT UP

Although the idiom “to wrap it all up with a bow” has acquired a popular metaphorical and even moral meaning, the literal force of that phrase still resonates among those who celebrate the gifting season. Our convenience culture, unfortunately, has shifted the emphasis from traditional gift-wrapping to ready-made, quickly deployed presentations such as gift bags or motif-printed boxes. As a result, it is not only a good man or a good woman that is hard to find. Good gift paper has all but gone missing in bricks-and-mortar retail outlets. Academic people presumably have the coordination, geometrical intuition, and imaginative capacity to relate three-dimensional objects to two-dimensional peels. They should easily qualify as skilled wrappers of gifts. Were a colleague seeking to add gift-wrapping to his or her slate of qualifications, where would he or she look for quality supplies?

Presumably the best place to look for wrapping is around a container, and so it is that far and away the best source for quality gift wrap is that endless fountain of packaging, [The Container Store](#). Although The Container Store operates tangible storefronts, its locations spring up only in the largest cities, the nearest to Louisiana being in congested Houston. For most folks, the Container Store is an online, mail-order operation. And what an operation! When it comes to Christmas paper, The Container Store has it all, whether appears featuring holiday-bedecked jungle animals or emojis in seasonal attire or even owls hooting it up for the holidays. Best of all, The Container Store features only sturdy, thick papers evidencing high-resolution, properly registered printing. Especially commendable in the Container Store selection is the abundance of shiny, extra-thick Christmas papers that not only shine under the tree but also provide a fully opaque barrier against prying eyes, thus preserving Santa’s secrets. The only downside is that The Container Store is very slow when it comes to shipping—but, on the other hand, it is one of the few sources that offers not only Christmas wrap, but gift paper of all genres all the year round. So plan ahead!

Next in line among the e-tailers is novelty and stationery provider [The Current Catalogue](#). The Current Catalogue rose to renown as the greatest of all personalizers and monogrammers. It sells everything from address labels to bank checks to nighties, all stamped with whatever letters, images, or words customers submit. Although much of the Current inventory must surely qualify as genuinely cheesy, it offers so colossal an array of wrapping paper that it ends up offering as many tasteful and appealing sheets as do the finest stationers. A recent design, for example, featured a rich red background foiling flowing and flying stars of every size, all connected by what appear to be gravity waves—a free-flowing fantasy variation on the Christmas Star that could stimulate everyone from William Morris to Jackson Pollack. The current catalogue requires a lot of careful perusal. There is always more, more, and more. But its wrapping products are of surprisingly high quality, and, to top it

all off, it presents a laudable collection of ribbons and bows!

One of the curious features of the e-tailing world is that it often conflicts with its storefront affiliates. So it is that [The World Market](#), which now has medium-box stores in most every town of any size, peddles an ensemble of junk that rivals even that of Pier One Imports even while its online catalogue delivers fine gift wrap designs from every corner of the world. One lively yet minimalist recent offering features white pine needles against a grey background highlighted with golden pine needles—definitely something suitable for that urban chic gift recipient. By the time that this issue reaches press, World Market will declare its fifty percent reduction pre-holiday sale. Don’t be left out!

The example of the grey and white paper suggests the truth of Mies Van Der Rohe’s adage that less is more. The composite landscape under the Christmas tree is sometimes more pleasing to the eye when at least a few packages feature restrained paper designs. For the tight, precise, elegant, and classical in wrapping paper, the best place to look is [Papyrus](#) online. Most smart shoppers think of Papyrus as the company that publishes the pricey but sophisticated greetings cards that appear on racks in upper end retailers such as Whole Foods. Papyrus, however, maintain a full line of wrapping paper, much of its in stable, refined, subtly energetic patterns and all of it in exquisitely tasteful colors. Go to Papyrus when unsure of the taste of the recipient and you won’t go wrong! A similar observation might be made with regard to German luxury vendor [Manufactum](#). If you are looking for those dainty, hand-printed, intricate and subtle patterns that we often associate with England but that are, in fact, produced in Germany and Italy, Manufactum is your first stop. Be advised, however, that, to purchase from Manufactum, customers must have a German delivery address, which is something of a high bar for most buyers to pass.

Now and then, one can even find a few nice papers on the shelves of Louisiana chain store. The best bet in a sudden emergency is surely Rite Aid, the drug store chain, which still maintains a touch of the old eccentricity that led it into bankruptcy several years ago. Most of the Rite Aid offering is part of vendor packages (from Hallmark or American Greetings), but, now and then, a delightful item will pop up. This columnist recently bought a roll of festive monkey motif paper that erupted unexpectedly from the otherwise mundane shelves of this usually predictable shop. Party stores, especially Party Time or Party City, are especially strong in gift-wrapping accessories such as fabulous bows or glitter.

Wrapping up a year need not be a conclusive matter. It is, rather, the time to innovate, to suggest that more is in the package than its contents. Today is the day to move beyond conventional gift wrap. Revive the tradition of careful gift preparation, an art that allows easy use of readily available materials to produce stunningly original effects. Merry Christmas to all and may all wrap it up nice and tight!





## ACADEMIC CENTER FOR ATHLETES OVERLEAPS INSTITUTIONAL GRADUATION RATE

From Kenneth O. Miles, leader of the LSU Academic Center for Student Athletes, the *Newsletter* has received an impressive set of statistics. In 2015, the graduation rate for LSU student athletes exceeded the graduation rate for all students, with 2016 showing a tie in the same categories. LSU led the SEC in the increase and improvement of the graduation success rate for academic athletes, the aforementioned rate climbing nineteen points, from sixty-nine to eighty-eight. LSU also zipped past the fiftieth percentile in academic success in an assortment of specific sport areas. Congratulations to Kenneth for choosing the right cleats for the race of achievement.

LSU hurtles over the competition in student athlete academic performance

## LSU OAA LAUNCHES BRANDING STUDY

Fans of Madison Avenue would have relished November, when innovative LSU A&M Provost Richard Koubek kicked off an effort to amplify LSU's academic brand. Magnetizing three major advertising firms, Koubek requisitioned an assortment of presentations and auditions from top-drawer marketing mavens. Key to the initiative is the re-emphasis of the *academic* brand, a downplaying of the athletic trademark, and an emphasis on the entirety of the academic community. The work is still in progress, but a Michelangelo can accomplish more than a little bit with a single brush stroke!

Bigtime branding firms compete for Louisiana accounts

## LSUA CHANCELLOR SEARCHERS TAP LIBERAL ARTS TRADITION

Post-election chatter has focused on the permeability of the many glass ceilings that intersect and striate the pyramids of power dotting the desert of academe. Behind if not above the notion of the glass ceiling is the assumption that such roofing has long been in place and is ready for a new generation of boundary-pushers. Some glass ceilings, however, are of recent vintage. One that is definitely of hardened, tempered if not bulletproof glass is that which blocks practitioners of the humanities from the executive suite. For only the last few decades, search firms and management boards have created the myth that liberal arts types lack the fundraising skill, political savvy, and business acumen to run complex institutions. Now the team searching for a Chancellor at LSU of Alexandria (LSUA) has shattered that expectation set. Anointing Guiyou Huang as the new LSUA Chancellor, LSUA governance contributors chose a leader proficient in English and comparative literature. True, Huang felt compelled to gussy up his credentials with one of those premium-priced certificate programs run by the ivy leagues, but his fundamentally strong academic credentials emerge from the world of literary studies. It might be too much to expect that Huang will reverse the vocational emphasis that has sparred with the aspiration to comprehensive university education at regional campuses—but faculty should hope for that outcome and, if hope fails, help the new Chancellor reconnect with his roots.



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# Guest Column

## SYLLABUS DATABASE

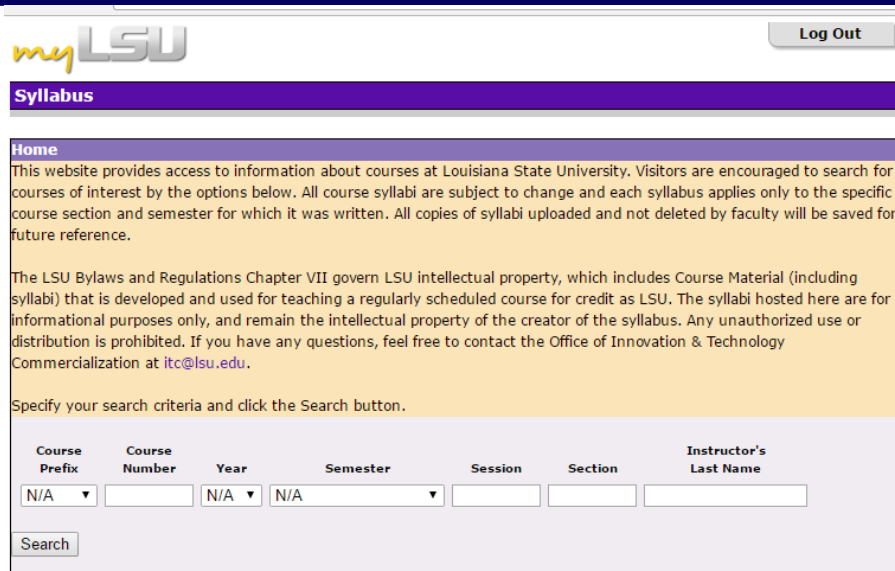
The Office of the University Registrar is pleased to announce the creation of a syllabus database. This initiative was prompted by a Student Government resolution that recommended the creation of the database. With the assistance and guidance of Information Technology Services, the database is now a reality.

According to University Registrar Robert Doolos, while faculty are not required to post their syllabi to the database, the University hopes that they will do so. It will be a tremendous help to students as they select classes to schedule for upcoming terms. Hopefully, it will decrease the amount of “turbulence” that occurs in their schedules starting the first class day each semester.

The database can be accessed at this link [www.lsu.edu/syllabus](http://www.lsu.edu/syllabus). All faculty will have access to update the database with their syllabi. Teaching assistants who are the instructors of record will need to contact Assistant Director Patrick Newcomb ([pnewco1@lsu.edu](mailto:pnewco1@lsu.edu)) to obtain update access.

For additional information regarding the database two frequently asked questions documents, one for faculty and one for students, are available on the Office of the University Registrar website by visiting [www.lsu.edu/registrar](http://www.lsu.edu/registrar) and selecting “academics.”

— By Robert K. Doolos  
Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar



The screenshot shows the 'myLSU Syllabus' website. At the top right is a 'Log Out' button. Below the header is a 'Home' section with a welcome message and a disclaimer about LSU Bylaws and Regulations Chapter VII. A search section follows, with the instruction 'Specify your search criteria and click the Search button.' Below this is a search form with fields for Course Prefix (dropdown menu showing 'N/A'), Course Number (text input), Year (dropdown menu showing 'N/A'), Semester (dropdown menu showing 'N/A'), Session (text input), Section (text input), and Instructor's Last Name (text input). A 'Search' button is located at the bottom left of the form.

## TIP OF THE MONTH: GUMP'S CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS

One of the terrible consequences of globalization has been the decline in both quality and selection of Christmas tree ornaments. The fragility and associated shipping costs of handmade European ornaments have conspired, along with the dominance of “big box” retailers, to advance the market share of simplified ornament sets manufactured in oppressive societies that offer cheap labor. Astoundingly, that old stand-by or California luxury shoppers, [Gump's](#), has rushed into upper-end market with a noble as well as extensive ensemble of ornaments, many of them emanating from the old world and even those of third-world origins being carefully vetted and curated. Accessible via a direct [link](#), the Gump's ornament line includes such novelties as a dapper owl, a skiing jolly bear (a *Newsletter* favorite), and even a few Buddhist-inspired tree-enhancers. Shipping of these light if brittle items is surprising inexpensive. Now is the time to add charm and elegance to your tree by giving that wreath-wearing northern European glass bunny a tent on the Tannenbaum!



## DECEMBER ALEXANDRIA SUMMIT STIRS ACTION

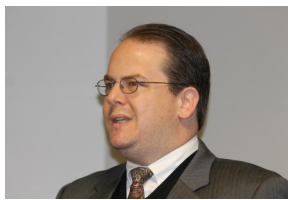
The six-year anniversary meeting of the “Alexandria Summit” not only rollicked with inventiveness but also culminated in action plans. Opening with a welcome from outgoing interim LSUA Chancellor Haywood Joiner, the meeting surged into an original presentation by longtime faculty activist Thomas Miller of Southern University, who explored the situation of smaller and special-purpose institutions in a state dominated by a large flagship university. Miller laid out a dazzling spectrum of options for those who hope to attract public interest to and otherwise to showcase the merits of campuses with special missions. Following Professor Miller presentation, Matthew Butkus of McNeese State University delved into his upgraded faculty satisfaction survey instrument, with Michael Meeks of LSUS offering to host the assessment device on his Survey Monkey site and with a time-line for revision, distribution, and evaluation of the survey taking form. Conferees enjoyed lunch with Commissioner Rallo, the details of whose central Louisiana stakeholder tour are provided elsewhere in this *Newsletter*. Following lunch, Summit Meeting participants spent several hours in avid discussion of the consequences and proper faculty response to the failure of Constitutional Amendment 2 and in analytical review of the actions and proposals emerging from the AAUP National Council meeting. Also on the agenda were announcements relating to the February 2017 Alexandria meeting, slated for the 11<sup>th</sup> of that Valentine-saturated month, where AAUP Collective Bargainin Conference leader Howard Bunsis and labor leader Michael Walker-Jones will headline the card.



Julie Rutledge animates the Alexandria discussion



Southern's Thomas Miller gives hope to small institutions



Matthew Butkus reviews the faculty survey

## SAVE THE DATE!

February 11  
Alexandria Summit Meeting



**Attending will be:**

**AAUP Union Organizer  
Howard Bunsis**

**Former LAE Union Leader  
Michael Walker-Jones**

**GET READY TO ORGANIZE!**



## LOUISIANA AAUP COUNCIL MEMBERS ENDORSE AAUP RESOLUTIONS

Every November, the American Association of university Professors ([AAUP](#)) holds a synod of its National Council members to address assorted issues. Louisiana holds no less than three seats or a full eight percent of the Council positions. At the late November meeting, those three members—SUSLA's Sonya Hester; ULL's Leslie Bary; LSU's Kevin L. Cope—joined with other Council members in endorsing two major actions. First, the Council accepted, endorsed, and applauded the new AAUP report on the threats to student media, a blistering yet detailed and precise document that, for the first time, reveals the extent to which administrations, politicians, and influence groups have attempted to censor, regulate, or even shut down student newspapers and student online news outlets. The devastating and yet necessary report can be read [online](#). Second, the Council members voted in favor of a resolution concerning the climate on campuses subsequent to the November 8<sup>th</sup> national election. That resolution, which is also available [online](#), calls on campuses and their leaders to stand up to assaults on independent, fact-driven research; to affirm academic freedom and academic values; to protect groups that are under threat; and to minimize collaboration with immigration officials, complying with warrants and cleaving to the law but not gathering information concerning immigration status or otherwise laying the groundwork for persecutions.

In other action, Council Members Leslie Bary and Sonya Hester spoke ardently concerning the AAUP dues policy and in support of an outreach to southern states and to states where faculty cannot unionize. Council Member Kevin L. Cope asked for assurances that the cash balances of the AAUP would move into fruitful investments now that the AAUP had regained financial stability and therefore required less liquidity.



AAUP Council members Kevin Cope and Sonya Hester confer with Council Member Julian Madison





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## KREWE OF RALLO ROLLS THROUGH CENLA

No commissioner in recent memory has made so apt a use of public events as has the indefatigable Joseph C. Rallo, whose now legendary peregrinations have taken him to every corner, purlieu, nook, cranny, or even campus in the state, always drawing an audience and ever appearing on the video tube. Rallo's latest "stakeholder" engagement effort, the "Central Louisiana Tour," allowed the commissioner to cement bonds with Louisiana's least visible decision-makers and to buoy up spirits in the neglected core of the state. Rallo's tour culminated in a grand, sumptuously catered luncheon in which he reviewed the grim economic data relating to the funding of Louisiana higher education and in which he strategically conjugated disaffected academics and erring political and industry leaders in the same large room—the proverbial "big tent"—by way of letting the bigwigs hear about the disasters that their choices are precipitating. LSU of Alexandria faculty leader Bernard Gallagher, for example, questioned the "do more with less" mantra, wondering aloud what more he, as a hugely overburdened professor, could do. "What do you want, a nervous breakdown?" Gallagher quizzed. Congratulations to Commissioner Rallo for another innovative outreach effort; let's hope that it works.



Media-savvy Rallo blitzes CENLA

## ANIMAL IMPOSTER IMPINGING ON CAREGIVERS?

Perhaps the strangest story of recent vintage is that of the management coaching sessions that have created more than a bit of turmoil in LSU's renowned veterinary academy. Plagued by more skirmishes than Beatrix Potter's Squirrel Nutkin has acorns, the V-School commissioned a management coach to address an assortment of diversity and industrial relations problem. Trouble is, the avid tone of the seminars created a subcutaneous gossip culture that resulted in a new set of social issues. In a November 16<sup>th</sup> memorandum obtained by *Newsletter* staffers, Vet School top brass report that controversial trainer Shawn McVey will return, comet-like, for another orbit through the riverside facility during 2017. A visit to McVey's [web site](#) raises more than a few questions. McVey, who speaks of himself in the third person, affirms that "Shawn is an open, honest person who will push all the right buttons." This mechanical metaphor and this boldly confident tone suggests, at the least, a highly deterministic approach to collegial relations. From his "biography," we learn that McVey took a degree in political science but then acquired a "background" "as a psychotherapist" and became "the first non-veterinarian to be named to the Board of Directors of the American Animal Hospital Association," but nowhere do we find evidence of formal study or certification in either psychology or veterinary science. Given what consultants charge and given that Louisiana universities founder in dire financial straits, the funding of consultations by those without indubitable credentials seems ill-advised.



## NICHOLSON CORRIDOR RECEIVES COSTLY FACELIFT

Oldtimers remember Tennessee Ernie Ford's bluesy ballad, *Sixteen Tons*, in which hoisting those 32,000 pounds only made the singer "another day older and deeper in debt." In another celebration of potentially burdensome debt, LSU Foundation President Stephen Moret and no less than seventeen other dignitaries broke ground on LSU's somewhat bulbous Nicholson Gateway project, an ambitious but not altogether attractive reconfiguration of the long and presently blighted strip of commercial real estate on the west-southwest side of the big campus in Baton Rouge. As if to bypass Tennessee Ernie's muscle-tiring miseries, a total of eighteen shovels attached to eighteen academically inclined capitalists turned an estimated eighteen pounds of mulch that nameless helpers had carefully strewn into a crescent form across the stage. In the event that the eighteen hands failed to lift this mighty load, an assortment of heavy construction equipment stood ready in the background, with hourly-paid operators keeping quiet and idle during this curious pageant. While the Louisiana glamourati basked in the media spotlight, other guests, including risk management experts and foreign bondholders, milled around and chatted with the crowd, rather like the devil chatting with Dr. Faustus's audience. Fortunately, no calamities produced even so much as a ding in the ceremonial hard hats capping the dignitaries—but the aforementioned risk and debt professionals may have work to do in the future if this grand scheme falls short of target occupancy.



Eighteen shovels and eighteen pounds of mulch at Nicholson Gateway



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# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

*LOVE & FRIENDSHIP* (Whit Stillman, 2016)

—Reviewed by Carl Freedman

Of the major British novelists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some—like Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and the Brontë sisters—have maintained a steady popularity to this day, while others, like Thackeray and Sir Walter Scott, have somewhat faded from the public consciousness. But Jane Austen's position is unique and astonishing. This obscure Regency provincial, who devoted a short uneventful life to writing about the uneventful fictional lives of obscure Regency provincials, has somehow become a mainstay of English-speaking popular culture in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Unbribed and unthreatened by literature teachers, many people today read and reread her six novels with all the enthusiasm of Rudyard Kipling's *Janeites*. A fair number also frequent websites and attend conventions devoted to Austenian matters, and some even compose their own fiction based on hers. Film and television adaptations of her work can hardly be turned out fast enough to meet the demand, and some of these—like the 1995 BBC miniseries of *Pride and Prejudice* that rocketed Colin Firth to major stardom, or Ang Lee's film of *Sense and Sensibility* that came out the same year—are significant artistic achievements in their own right. The Jane Austen Society of North America has no fewer than 65 active branches.

Yet one work of Austen's that has not yet attracted much attention is "Lady Susan," an epistolary novella that Austen wrote early in her career but that was never published until long after her death. Generally considered very minor Austen, it has been found of interest in the literary-critical tradition mainly as it foreshadows certain elements in *Mansfield Park* (which, though never as widely popular as *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*, is upheld by some critics as the most complex and interesting of the six novels). The comparative neglect of "Lady Susan" is, however, being alleviated right now as a result of *Love & Friendship*, Whit Stillman's retitled movie adaptation. There is surely no American filmmaker at work today who might more appropriately have tackled this project. In an era when more and more novels seem to approximate to screenplays, Stillman writes and directs movies that almost approximate to novels. Like Jane Austen, Stillman is interested in the ways that people talk to one another and the ways that they thereby form (romantic and other) relationships. Indeed, you might well describe *Metropolitan* (1990)—Stillman's first film and in my view his best prior to *Love & Friendship*—with the following (admittedly zany) device: "Imagine that Jane Austen was a screenwriter-director rather than a novelist. Imagine that, instead of a Regency provincial familiar with the English minor gentry, she was a late-20<sup>th</sup>-century Manhattanite familiar with the American upper class. Finally, imagine her a man. *Metropolitan* is the film she might have made." Jane Austen's fiction is, indeed, one of the topics that the characters of *Metropolitan* discuss.

So, in making *Love & Friendship*—surely his masterpiece to date—Stillman has, in a way, arrived at the consummation to which his earlier work points. Though the film can certainly be enjoyed without any knowledge of the Jane Austen original, such knowledge does make it easier to see just what Stillman is up to. "Lady Susan" is unique among Austen's works in featuring as its principal character what the author's contemporaries—and presumably the author herself—would have regarded as a genuinely wicked woman. We are normally meant to sympathize with Austen's heroines, despite their

shortcomings. Emma Woodhouse can be obtuse (or "clueless," in current jargon), and Elizabeth Bennet can be prejudiced (as the title of the novel that features her makes explicit), and Fanny Price can be a bit insipid; but they are all basically good people. Susan Vernon is not a good person. A proud and unrepentant adulteress, she is treacherous to her friends and cruel to her daughter. Yet she is not without attractive qualities, even apart from stunning physical beauty. Lady Susan is intelligent, energetic, witty, and high-spirited. Indeed, one has only, so to speak, to change the lighting a bit for this wicked woman to appear as almost a proto-feminist heroine. Lady Susan knows what she wants and goes out to try to get it (though she is not always successful). She is never content to sit back and let the men around her make the decisions that will determine her life. If she is shameless in using her sex appeal instrumentally, sex appeal is, after all, the only form of power at all likely to be available to a woman in her time and place.

It is above all this complexity in its main character—a woman who attracts us however strongly our moral sense urges us not to be attracted—that Stillman's film hits off so nicely. A recent widow whose late husband has left her a title but (mainly because of her own extravagance) little wealth, Lady Susan (Kate Beckinsale) is, in situation, that most typical Jane Austen figure: a young (or youngish—Susan is in her mid-thirties) woman whose personal charms and class background are considerably superior to her financial resources, and who therefore is in immediate need of a rich husband. Her situation is complicated by the fact that her teenage daughter Frederica (Morfydd Clark) is in very much the same position, and further complicated by the unaffected enjoyment Lady Susan takes, quite apart from pragmatic considerations, in flirting, and in doing more than flirting, with an attractive man—at the moment, chiefly one Lord Manwaring (Lochlann O'Mearáin), a handsome though not particularly affluent nobleman and somebody else's husband. Susan's schemes are thus necessarily complex—she has to juggle quite a few balls in the air simultaneously—and, in doing whatever needs to be done, she combines the ruthlessness of a Mafia hit man and the elaborate shrewdness of a chess grandmaster with irresistibly feminine charm. It is not only Beckinsale's good looks that enable her to incarnate Susan so convincingly. With an intellectual background rare in show business—in her youth she won literary prizes for her poetry and fiction, and she went on to study French and Russian literature at Oxford—Beckinsale is among the most intelligent actresses at work today, with a proven record in film adaptations of classic literature. Her breakthrough role was as Hero in Kenneth Branagh's filming of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), and she has delivered memorable performances as the title character in a screen version of *Emma* (Diarmud Lawrence, 1996) and as Maggie Verver in James Ivory's excellent 2000 adaptation of Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* (James being, as one of Kipling's characters points out, the direct literary descendant of Jane Austen). The aesthetically coruscating (if morally rancid) intelligence that Stillman's Susan projects is clearly based in Beckinsale's own powers of understanding.



—Continued on page 16



# Guest Column

## CAA Groundbreaking

On Friday, November 18, the Companion Animals Alliance (CAA) held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new \$12 million animal shelter that will soon be constructed on land donated by LSU. CAA is constructing the project funded completely by private donors with a new partnership with the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine.

"We now have a better location. We have a shelter that is going to be user friendly. We're going to be able to segregate sick animals and actually care for them where we don't have those facilities now," said Christel Slaughter, CAA chairman.

LSU President F. King Alexander was among the many representative that spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony.

"Speaking for the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine, we look forward to working with the Companion Animal Alliance to improve the health and well-being of sheltered animals, and to help educate our veterinary students in this important areas. This is truly a win-win for CAA, the vet school, the students and the animals."

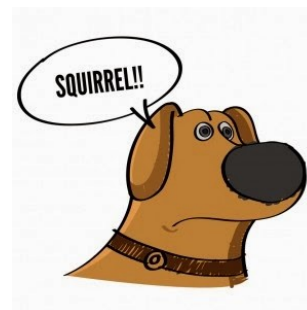
<http://www.ksla.com/story/33749056/caa-breaks-ground-on-new-animal-shelter-near-lsu-school-of-veterinary-medicine>

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## FADE AND CUT, OR, AMENDMENT TWO EDITED OUT

Distracted by the unexpected results of the November Presidential elections, denizens of public institutions seemed quickly to forget about Constitutional Amendment 2, the failed proposal to grant tuition autonomy to campuses. Not a single word pertaining to the abortive amendment was uttered at any of the higher education management board meetings in November or December. Why the sudden silence about an item that attracted so much conversation prior to November 8<sup>th</sup>? A look at the tactics of the four education systems and the Board of Regents may explain this unusual reticence. Accustomed to competition rather than cooperation, the four boards never coordinated or even developed any programs to convince the public to grant leeway to cash-strapped institutions. No four-system working group emerged; no public relations campaign exhorted the public. The Amendment 2 debacle also drew attention to the weakness of legislative and lobbying delegations in Louisiana higher education, which has long been accustomed to following orders rather than influencing policy and where legislative outreach officers often multitask in myriad other duties. When a frail campaign did emerge from LSU boosters, it took the form of billboards calling on an undefined "you" to "help LSU," a message that, if flashed in the wrong places, tended to polarize rather than unite, there being no reference to the other thirty institutions that so many voters hold dear. The system offices, alas, have too long taken the "Neville Chamberlain" approach, attempting to placate and minimize damage from hostile groups rather than affirm a convincing case clearly and resolutely. Time for a new approach to lobbying and public relations?



Stillman's screenplay follows Austen's text pretty closely. The filmmaker does add some extra characters and some twists and turns to the narrative, but almost always remains very much within the spirit of the original. Once or twice, perhaps, there is a touch that seems a bit intrusively "modern," in a way that might cause Austen among the shades to raise an eyebrow. In the novella, for example, we are left to imagine exactly what Lady Susan does during her private meetings with Manwaring. In the film, we learn that these meetings have resulted in Susan's pregnancy—which she is able, of course, to explain in a way that allows her to escape all possible inconvenience. Yet such small liberties are rare. The various elements of the film—the musical soundtrack, the use of precise Austenian English in the titles and narration, the evidently flawless costumes and set design, even the body language of the players—all combine to create the illusion that we are watching that impossible thing, a movie made in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: or, at any rate, a movie that a time traveler from the Georgian-Regency era could watch with effortless understanding.

It seems to me, indeed, that most of Stillman's revisions of Austen are not only Austenian in spirit but actually help to produce a work of art that is more robust, more three-dimensional, and more satisfying than the original. The suggestion may seem heretical from the standpoint of pure Janeite orthodoxy (even though we are comparing major Stillman with minor Austen). But one of the shortcomings of "Lady Susan" is that it is somewhat inhibited by its epistolary form. Though the epistolary novel was a popular 18<sup>th</sup>-century genre—and though its most notable practitioners included some of the writers, like Samuel Richardson and Fanny Burney, who influenced Austen most deeply—one may question whether it ever really suited Austen's largely dramatic talents; and Austen may have given her own implicit answer to this question in the fact that she never used the epistolary form in any of the works she chose to publish. In (mostly) stripping away the rather artificial convention of letter-writing, Stillman has opened up Austen's narrative, given it a far more emphatically dramatic form, and made room for various added delights that one strongly suspects Austen herself would have approved of.

Take the character of Sir James Martin (Tom Bennett), for instance. In both novella and film, he is a wealthy unmarried landowner whom Lady Susan considers an ideal match for Frederica but who winds up—well, I will let you find out for yourself the matrimonial fate in store for Sir James. Austen tells us that his intellectual powers are feeble—he is "no Solomon," as Susan puts it—but in the text he remains a pretty dim figure of no particular interest. Stillman and Bennett re-invent him as a well-intentioned but hopeless numskull who is inadvertently and hilariously entertaining to several of the other characters as well as to the viewer. At dinner, looking down at a plate of peas, Sir James is delighted by these "tiny green balls" and wonders what they are called. Coming upon Frederica reading a book by William Cowper (one of Austen's own favorite poets, by the way), he is impressed to learn that Cowper wrote both poetry and verse—though, in the pertinent usage, they are, of course, exactly the same thing. Upon learning that the Bible contains only Ten

Commandments, and not, as he had supposed, twelve, he is delighted to think that he can now go hunting on the Sabbath. None of this has any explicit warrant in Austen's text, but such additions to it are totally consonant with the genius of the author who invented such memorable fools as Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* and Mrs. Elton in *Emma*.

Then there is Mrs. Alicia Johnson, Lady Susan's confidante and the only woman in the world, it appears, whom Susan actually likes and trusts (though she is not above using Alicia for her own ends). In the novella, she exists mainly so that Susan may have a correspondent to whom she expresses her true thoughts (Mrs. Johnson does, however, contribute a few letters of her own). In the film, as played by the always wonderful Chloë Sevigny, Mrs. Johnson not only comes alive but becomes one of the most important characters in the film after Susan herself. For one thing, we get some idea of the basis of the friendship between Susan and Alicia from Alicia's point of view. Very nearly as physically attractive as Susan, and with moral standards evidently no loftier, Alicia seems to live vicariously through Susan, delighting in the kind of behavior in which she might well indulge herself were she not restrained by prudence. For Alicia is married to an older man, a wealthy merchant of insistent, punitive rectitude. Mr. Johnson, in the film, himself comes alive in a small but excellent performance by Stephen Fry, and makes clear that, though he may not be familiar with every detail of Alicia's scheming with Susan, he is generally aware of the kind of women his wife and her friend are. Eventually (in both novella and movie) he forbids Mrs. Johnson to have anything at all to do with Lady Susan. In an inspired addition to Austen, Stillman makes Alicia an American expatriate, a Tory who supported the British Crown during the American Revolution and who has therefore found it safer to reside in the mother country. The ultimate punishment with which she is threatened by her husband is being sent back to her homeland of Connecticut; and the prospect of enduring a cold, dangerous Atlantic passage, and then possibly being tarred and feathered by patriotic American vigilantes, is usually sufficient to keep Alicia (somewhat) in line. Since, as *Mansfield Park* makes especially clear, Jane Austen was more aware of and interested in the New World than is often remembered, I think she would approve this trans-Atlantic revision of her story.

It is no real paradox to suggest that, in tackling a minor example of Austen's fiction, Stillman may have made the best screen adaptation of Austen yet. For, though there are certainly exceptions, great books are not, in general, the best candidates for making great cinema or great television. It is the interesting but limited and flawed work of prose fiction that is most likely to stimulate the filmmaker's imagination—whereas the triumphant finished masterpiece may overwhelm it. Alfred Hitchcock, perhaps the greatest filmmaker of them all, created masterpieces out of such lesser fictions as John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) and Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959), but felt that his only attempt to film a great novel—*Sabotage* (1936), which was based on Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907)—was a mistake; for the brilliance of Conrad's text inhibited the filmmaking project. If I were tasked with briefing a resurrected Jane Austen on what the world today is making of her work, *Love & Friendship* would be the first item in the screening room.

*The staff at the Newsletter wishes you Happy Holidays!*

