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Faculty Senate Newsletter, January 2010

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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LSU FACULTY SENATE

Monthly Newsletter

January 2010



President's Message

While LSU has been surmounting obstacle after obstacle on its way to achievement after achievement, LSU faculty governance has also been ripening, growing in stature and influence, and emerging as a nationwide model for responsible faculty supervision of universities. LSU, for example, is the home base of the Southeastern Conference Association of Faculty Leaders, is one of two coordinating centers for the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates, is the general headquarters of the LSU System Council of Faculty Advisors, and has hosted the presentations of a variety of dignitaries, from the Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education to members of the Louisiana Postsecondary Education Review Commission.

To help our colleagues keep pace with the many activities of the Faculty Senate and to deliver essential information to those faculty whose busy schedules leave no time for Senate meetings, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee is launching this online newsletter, which we expect to deliver on a monthly basis. Rather than beleaguer its audience with every last detail of Senate and Executive Committee activity, this newsletter will keep faculty members abreast of the most important developments in the management of Louisiana's preeminent higher education institution. This newsletter will also include special features, such as the "[Administrator in the Spotlight](#)," a column in which our promising young Faculty Senate graduate assistants will interview and report on the responsibilities and lifestyles of the day-to-day managers of our great university.

We thank you for your interest and hope that this newsletter helps you to help us improve LSU.

With all good wishes,

Kevin L. Cope, Faculty Senate President

LSU Making Efforts in Midst of Budget Crisis

All faculty members know that LSU as well as all other publicly-funded universities in Louisiana are in the midst of a budget crisis even more severe than the oil slump of the 1990s. Faculty members should be assured that the Faculty Senate has been relentless in its efforts and has steadfastly supervised the University response to this evolving fiscal struggle. In addition to sponsoring its forums, in which university officials receive input directly from their faculty constituents, Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope has held regular meetings with Chancellor Michael Martin and has also consulted with most every decision-making administrator on the campus. Cope sits on two committees concerned with planning for and managing university policy: one concerned with multi-year budgeting and one charged with setting procedures for accelerated responses to imminent budget shortfalls. The latter committee also includes five highly experienced, non-administrator professors who have compiled long records of faculty governance service. Chancellor Martin is to be complimented for his unprecedented efforts to involve and to consult with faculty regarding the dreadful economic circumstances in which the Flagship University is immersed.

The Faculty Senate has also undertaken several initiatives of its own. On January 26th, the Senate President transmitted a letter to United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan ([available on the Senate web site](#)), asking that any action regarding the "stimulus waiver" be postponed until a public hearing on and audit of Louisiana higher education finances can be conducted. The stream of confusing and inconsistent information emerging from the Governor's office and the indication of mixed motivations among state officials suggest that careful and open study is required before adjusting rules that maintain higher education funding at 2006 levels or above. The Faculty Senate is encouraging faculty members and faculty governance officials not only at LSU but at all Louisiana higher education institutions to express their views to the relevant elected officials.

General Education Committee Reviews Transfer Student Policies

Bill 356 of the Louisiana Legislature, commonly known as the "Nevers Bill," requires that all Louisiana higher education institutions make available to students a program of study that will result in a two-year credential that may be transferred to any other Louisiana institution and that will procure both junior standing (although not admission into any specific senior college) and credit for completion of general education requirements. The LSU Faculty Senate President serves as the Chair of the General Education of the "Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council" that was established through Senator Nevers's legislation. To date, that Council has developed a slate of thirty-nine general-education instructional hours that may travel seamlessly among Louisiana institutions. LSU's general education requirements served as the model or template upon which the transportable general-education component was constructed. Presently, the General Education Committee is addressing the knotty problem of the remaining twenty-one transferable hours in "common course electives." Committee Chair Cope has put forward a proposal to establish "tracks" that will ready students to make intelligent choices among possible major areas and senior colleges and that will maximize chances that incoming transfer students will gain admission to desired senior colleges. Cope is also working to ensure that institutions receiving transfer students retain the right to admit or not admit students into particular colleges and that those colleges may require ([continued page 2](#))

Upcoming Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forum

The popular, refreshment-enhanced Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forums will soon resume. The first Forum of the spring semester will address what is surely the most interesting and pressing general topic of the present time: planning for the future of the University amidst potentially catastrophic financial pressures. Entitled "Battling Navigators and Shifting Winds: The Future of the Flagship" and featuring Chancellor Michael Martin, the Forum will take place on Wednesday, February 10, at 3:30 pm in the Bo Campbell Auditorium of the Cox Center (near the Indian Mounds). Light refreshments will be available commencing at 3:00 pm.

New Faculty Issues Discussion Series

In addition to the Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forums, the Faculty Senate will also sponsor a new set of events, the Faculty Issues Discussion Series, a sequence of roundtable discussions designed to examine specific topics in detail and with input from faculty experts. The initial set of three discussions has been organized by the Ad Hoc Committee on Bargaining and Representation, a committee charged with examining and making recommendations concerning faculty working conditions, rules, and opportunities here at LSU. As we go to press, the first roundtable is occurring, featuring Benefits expert Roger Laine on the topic "LSU Faculty—Poor in Benefits." On February 23 at 3:00 pm in Howe-Russell Complex E130, AAUP President John Protevi will lead a discussion on "The Turning Point: The Crisis in Public Higher Education in Historical Perspective." The third and concluding discussion will take place on March 23 in Howe-Russell Complex E130 at 3:00 pm and will feature Professor Michelle Massé, who will lead discussion on the topic "What's Your job? The Silent Economy of Service in Higher Education." These discussions promise to be enriching as well as excellent starting points for faculty initiatives in the areas of academic contracts, Human Resource Management services to faculty, and workplace conditions.

Board of Regents Asks For Input on Statewide Admission Criteria

In other statewide action, the Board of Regents has introduced and asked for comment on statewide minimum criteria for admission to colleges. The LSU Faculty Senate, in tandem with the LSU Admissions, Standards, and Honors Committee ("ASH"), has formulated a response. Although LSU governance officers favor the elevation of admissions requirements, they are keen to retain the authority of local faculty over admission to their campuses. Vigilance will continue.

Faculty Senate Media Spots

In connection with the campaign to provide adequate funding for LSU and its brother and sister institutions, the Senate President has spoken on several occasions with reporters from the television and print media ([WBRZ](#), [WAFB](#), [LPB](#), [The Advocate](#), [The LSU Reveille](#), Gannett News Service, Metrowire). Links to these appearances are available upon request.

ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Bob Rasmussen, Assistant Vice President for System Relations

For Bob Rasmussen, working in the LSU System means belonging to a community. When asked what he likes most about LSU, Rasmussen responds simply yet sincerely, "This is my family." Reflecting on his thirty six years of service, he adds, "I love the people who work at LSU. There's a special spirit here."

Rasmussen, Assistant Vice President for System Relations, joined the LSU community after receiving his Master's and Doctoral degrees in Educational Administration at the University of New Orleans. Having briefly taught and worked as an educational consultant at the School of Dentistry in New Orleans, Rasmussen eventually became an assistant to then Dean of the Medical Center Allen Copping. He followed Copping to Baton Rouge when he became LSU's Chancellor. Since then, Rasmussen has assisted the LSU System's President, beginning with Copping's appointment to that office in 1985.

Meeting the needs of the LSU System, which encompasses not just the five campuses spread out across the state but also the law center, agricultural center, biomedical research center, and several health care centers, is a job that presents some challenges. There is no standard model for maintaining such a complex system. Part of the difficulty in Louisiana in particular is the role history has played in the creation of academic institutions. Rasmussen points out, for instance, that Southern



University was founded during the years of segregation. Similarly, each university in LSU's system has unique dynamics the LSU System staff must contend with. "Each institution here is completely different," Rasmussen states succinctly.

Rasmussen has numerous responsibilities as Assistant Vice President, including monitoring and maintaining the LSU System's by laws, serving as the Chair of the Resident Committee, sitting on the Council of Faculty Advisors and Council of Staff Advisors, and setting the holiday schedule. His tasks are tailored to the special needs of the System President and Board of Supervisors, which means he enjoys a good amount of variety in his job. "There's always something different every day," he observes.

The various functions of the LSU System office seem almost herculean in their scope. Just arranging board meetings, a task which Rasmussen shares with other Vice Presidents within the LSU System, can present logistical problems. Moreover, the relatively small number of people who make up the LSU System office are not only responsible for setting academic policies but also for managing an enormous budget and serving the needs of thousands of employees state wide. "It's a big enterprise," says Rasmussen, "and we've got good people."

One glance around Rasmussen's office tells even the casual observer that he is an avid golfer. When not perfecting his game, Rasmussen enjoys reading history books on World War II and crime dramas. He and his wife, Wendy, who works as a nurse, were determined to avoid a hectic travel schedule over the holidays this year, and enjoyed a quiet winter break at home.

Rasmussen's sense of belonging to the LSU community extends to his awareness of the impact Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav have had on the region. The ongoing LSU System project that he feels is perhaps the most critical, for instance, is the construction of a new hospital in New Orleans. Still in the early planning stages, the facility would replace Charity Hospital, which was destroyed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Likewise, following Hurricane Gustav, Rasmussen and his family adopted a rescue dog, who they named Sugar.

Rasmussen is also conscious of the ramifications budget cuts will have on the LSU System. He quite candidly states that "Funding is always the number one thing that we face," adding that the outlook for the 2010 2011 school year "is going to greatly challenge all our campuses."

Despite these sobering thoughts, Rasmussen remains devoted to the LSU Community. He recognizes LSU as "an organization that has always emphasized quality and excellence." Above all, he is proud of LSU's commitment to its students: "I see a lot of caring for students out there."

Monitoring Quality of Campus Services

Owing to the decline in public funding for higher education, many campus services have been impaired, as evidenced by the recent million-dollar cut to the Office of Facility Services (the repairmen and repairwomen of our campus). Many service providers on the campus, however, derive revenue from other sources and should maintain the usual standard of service. The Faculty Senate continues to monitor all services on the campus, convinced that details are equally important with visionary plans when it comes to building a reputable institution.

Recently, the Faculty Senate observed a sudden, peculiar, and inexplicable dip in the quality of both food and service at the Faculty Club. Through the intervention of Chartwells Catering administrator David Heidke, that problem seems to have been resolved. Thanks, David, for your help. The Faculty Senate also noticed some overly ambitious, potentially misleading advertising creeping into Campus Federal Credit Union envelopes. Senate officials contacted CFCU President John Milazzo, who has graciously resolved this inadvertent problem.

If you encounter any difficulties with LSU services that are not attributable to funding impediments, please report those shortcomings to any Faculty Senate Executive Committee member ([addresses are available on the Senate web site](#)).

Transfer Student Policies (continued)

the completion of institution-defined curricula in order to earn degrees. The role of transfer students is likely to become increasingly important in future years as LSU attempts to maintain or increase enrollment levels among top-quality students despite declines in the college-age population.

Improving Library Research Tools

With the assistance of Middleton Library online catalogue czar William Armstrong, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has implanted in the library idea nursery several suggestions for the improvement of library searching tools and catalogue functions. During a recent hands-on session, Dr. Armstrong and Executive Committee members were able to produce a surprising number of anomalies, oddities, and challenges while conducting typical library searches. Clearly, the Middleton online catalogue needs some adjustments. Solutions are underway..

LSU Libraries and Faculty Senate Working Together to Organize Records

Records of the Faculty Senate are presently dispersed in several locations: The Hill Library; the Faculty Senate office in Pleasant Hall; cyberspace; and "the cloud" (as informatic folks call it). A consultation with Hill Library rare book expert Elaine Smyth produced a medium-term solution. Archive specialist Tara Laver collected documents from the Senate office on January 25th and is in the process of working out a perpetual storage and easy access plan. Before long, all Senate records should be in a safe place as well as searchable and accessible. Many records will find their way to the Louisiana Digital Library for permanent electronic safeguarding..

Update to Optional Retirement Plan Issues

On January 28th, the LSU Faculty Senate President issued an update letter on the persisting difficulties with the Optional Retirement Plan. Contributions to that plan continue to find their way into state coffers rather than faculty accounts. For a complete update, please review that [letter on the Faculty Senate web site](#).

Faculty Senate Forms New Museum and Performance Committee

The Faculty Senate has formed a new ad hoc committee: The Museum and Performance Action Plan Task Force. Faculty members statewide are concerned about the lack of concentration of effort among the museums and performance offerings and are eager to maximize the public cultural outreach of the University. Committee convener Ravi Rau has initiated discussion on a comprehensive plan for the museums and for our performers—a plan that can succeed even while in financial straits. More to come as this story evolves.

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Questions? Comments? Email gmlch1@tigers.lsu.edu or ckayse1@lsu.edu

