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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, February 2010

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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### *President's Message*

This second issue of the Faculty Senate Newsletter comes with thanks for the favorable reception offered to the first installment. Already the breadth and variety of offerings is growing. This month, we add an "Education Opinion" area. All colleagues are invited to submit letters or brief statements of opinion on matters of academic or institutional policy. This issue of the newsletter also introduces reportage by our graduate assistants, Greg Molchan and Casey Kayser, who covered the recent Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forum, and continues our monthly "Administrator in the Spotlight" feature. Readers of this issue will discover a wide range of information that extends from update reports on faculty benefits package problems to the statewide

structure of higher education to prospects of new site licenses for software. Is there an issue or story that you'd like for us to cover and that merits dissemination to all our colleagues? Please let us know via the contact addresses shown in the [mini-colophon bar](#). And many thanks for your continued support of faculty governance efforts during an especially stressful time.

With all good wishes,

Kevin L. Cope, Faculty Senate President

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### Optional Retirement Plan Update

Those following the controversy over retirement plans available for academic professionals have been hit with another brutal surprise. The Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana, which administers both the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) and the Teachers Retirement Plan (TRSL) has announced that the flow-through from employer contributions to retirement will sink incrementally, by another 0.06%, even while the employer contribution (the amount that LSU pays to the retirement board) will rocket upward another 5%. In simple terms: LSU is contributing far more (nearly a one-third increase) while the amount going to employee accounts continues its downward spiral. Worse, the "invisible" contribution for participants in the defined-benefit plan, which doesn't show up in paychecks, is also going up a whopping \$10,000,000.00 or more.

Despite these breathtaking levies to resolve an unfunded accrued liability (which was created by extravagant promises to public school teachers, not to professors), there is also abundant good news. Benefits Committee Chair Roger Laine and Senate President Kevin Cope held a lengthy working meeting with LSU System officials by way of planning for an upcoming presentation at the next Board of Supervisors meeting on March 5th. Although the Supervisors do not directly control the retirement system, the Supervisors are nevertheless well-connected people who have indicated an interest in the impact of benefits shortfalls on faculty recruitment and retention. As explained in earlier letters from the Senate, this problem will be slow in resolution, but motion toward the repair of a broken system is now faster than ever before. Public as well as faculty attention to this problem is growing. A large cache of information on the retirement plan crisis as well as on benefits problems generally may be found at the Faculty Senate web site.

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### Transfer and Articulation: Implementation of the "Nevers" Bill Moves Ahead

Along with LSU-Eunice Provost Steve Guempel, Senate President Kevin Cope represents LSU and the LSU System on the General Education Committee of the Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council (SATC). The SATC was established by 2009 Louisiana Legislature Act 356, commonly known as the "Nevers Bill" after Senator Ben Nevers, its sponsor.

Several misconceptions about the Nevers legislation have caused concern around the LSU campus. Colleagues should be advised that the Nevers legislation establishes only a procedure for the block transfer of sixty hours of credit (in effect, an associate's degree) among Louisiana universities. It guarantees admission to a four-year university, junior standing, and credit for completion of all general education requirements. The Nevers legislation does not guarantee admission into a particular college or degree program and it does not require that the aforementioned sixty hours of credit count toward any particular major. On the contrary, the guidance from the Regents stresses that the sixty hours should not push students into any one degree program or college. Students who wish to transfer a few courses will need to make recourse to other arrangements (such as the extant transfer matrix) or enter into "2 + 2" programs of the like.

As of press time for this newsletter, the first part of the sixty-hour block, the thirty-nine hours of general education, had been planned and ratified by the SATC Gen Ed committee. That plan, which is modeled on the general education programs in force at several LSU system campuses and which is highly adaptable to LSU, will now be vetted and implemented by the Board of Regents. Again, that plan applies only to transfer students; those who remain "native" students and those who transfer a few courses will not qualify for this program. Senator Craig Freeman is leading a Communications Committee charged with explaining the program to high-school counselors and guidance counselors in higher education institutions throughout the state. The SATC Gen Ed Committee is now working on the remaining twenty-one (continued page 2)

### Spending Our Way into Savings

Readers of the LSU System "personnel actions" know that LSU's economic troubles have not halted all salary increases. Over the last four months, raises in the vicinity of \$70,000.00, \$26,000.00, \$30,000.00, and \$5,000.00 per annum have found their way to an assortment of visible administrators. It is true that the overall salary burden of the administration has decreased owing to the departure of some senior administrative personnel and it is also true that the market dictates salaries in certain specialty areas, but it is also true that even the Chancellor has been asked to defer part of his compensation until such a time as he proves his mettle and until his retention confirms that the prosperity of our institution is increasing. Is not the cause of retention served by requiring administrators to become long-term stakeholders in the future of LSU?

### Preserving History: Archive Plan Developing

The LSU Faculty Senate is leading the way in institutional record-keeping by turning over our massive body of records and electronic files to Librarian Tara Laver, a specialist in archiving. While exploring the possibilities for Senate record preservation, Senate officials discovered that the University as a whole lacks a record-maintenance program and is woefully deficient with regard to national standards for the preservation of our institutional archive and our institutional history. With support from Provost Astrid Merget, the Faculty Senate has asked School of Library and Information Science Dean Beth Paskoff to develop a plan for university record-storage, inventorying, and curatorship. Paskoff will work with graduate students in her school, possibly as part of a research project, to develop a records "schedule" and otherwise to lend order and safety to the documentary foundation of Tiger history.

### The 120-Hour Degree

In response to recommendations from legislators, the LSU System is initiating discussions of a 120-hour maximum for all Bachelor's Degree programs. LSU System President John Lombardi will unveil a letter calling for an initial study of this prospect at the March 5th Board of Supervisors meeting. Although this area is already hot with controversy and is of great concern to those whose programs must meet standards imposed by outside accrediting agencies, the LSU System faculty senate presidents from the eleven LSU campuses have, to date, been favorably impressed with President Lombardi's intention to conduct this debate at the grassroots level by creating on-campus, faculty-enriched commissions. The 120-hour cap being a statewide issue for all four higher-education systems, the LSU campus senate presidents are hoping that President Lombardi's enlightened approach to this challenge will be imitated by the other three system presidents.

## ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Brian Voss, Vice Chancellor for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer

When asked to name one of the fundamental services LSU provides its students and the academic community at large, many people might overlook Information Technology. Not Brian Voss. "Everything has a tech underpinning in today's university world," Voss says.

Voss, who has served as LSU's CIO since April of 2005, understands better than most the behind the scenes position of Information Technology Services within the university. Voss comments, for instance, although "nothing changed in terms of broad strokes," his position was only raised to a Vice Chancellorship in 2008 as an "acknowledgment of the role of IT within the university administration." Yet Voss makes the increasing importance ITS plays at LSU clear. He points out, for instance, that the majority of people within the LSU community carry a cell phone, PDA, Blackberry, iPhone or other electronic device. "ITS is responsible," Voss says, "for providing an environment in which these devices which we all have can operate effectively."

Voss has been part of the march towards seamless integration of information technologies in the workplace since the late



1970s. After completing his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering at Purdue, Voss began work at a factory in Bloomington, where he drew upon his interest in the then emerging field of computer simulation modeling to build assembly lines. From there, Voss was offered a position managing the Higher Education Administrative Computing department at Indiana University. Voss muses on the course he took in computer simulation modeling at Purdue and how that experience ultimately led to a career serving the academic community. "You never know what class you're going to take that is going to have an impact on you," he says.

As the head of a department that prides itself on efficiency, Voss is no stranger to looking for ways to save money. He mentions, for example, that

the cost of email services has gone from fifty dollars per student to zero. Yet Voss is aware that maintaining and improving the technological services that allow LSU to conduct research and collaborate with scholars at other universities requires a certain amount of funding. "No bucks, no Buck Rogers," he observes.

Since coming to LSU, Voss has overseen significant changes in the role ITS plays in meeting the university's needs. ITS's network security team, for instance, has grown from one person devoting a portion of the work day to monitoring the network for potential threats to nine people keeping watch full-time. In 2005 LSU acquired Pelican, a state of the art supercomputer that handles the high performance computing needs of researchers and faculty, from IBM.

These changes are a part of the Flagship IT Strategy, a collaborative effort between ITS and the LSU community. Since the strategy was first mapped out five years ago, ITS has provided a host of services and technologies to the university, including the Faculty Technology Center in Middleton Library, the GROK Knowledge Base, Tigerware, licensing with Microsoft, and approximately 2100 wireless access points across LSU's main campus. Voss attributes these successes to working closely with LSU faculty and students. "This is not a strategic plan that the members of the ITS organization sat down and wrote," he acknowledges, "this was actually put together by committees from the community."

Above all, Brian Voss sees his role at LSU as an opportunity to build on its successes through building relationships with students and faculty and delivering the technological services they need to maintain a high academic standard. "I enjoy building things," he says, "There's a wonderful faculty here. There's an extremely bright and engaged student population here."

## EDUCATION OPINION

### Layoff Notices to Instructors

We seem to have dodged a bullet. Now what?

Although the Legislature still has to act, the Governor's budget request makes it likely that the mass layoff notices to over 400 LSU Instructors will be withdrawn. This is welcome but not reason to lapse into business as usual. Besides the contingency of facing similar crises in coming years, we should correct an untenable situation.

Consider a "What if?" Suppose the Instructors, fed up with such threats in spite of decades of loyal and excellent service to LSU, quit (rightfully, in disgust?). Right now, LSU Theater is performing Ibsen's "A Doll's House" where Nora leaves at the end when the immediate crisis seems to have passed, leaving the husband and family in an "empty" house and life. Given that 400 Instructors out of a faculty of 1300 do perhaps over half of LSU's teaching, would not LSU be similarly emptied? Could LSU function at all without its Instructors?

We get too involved in questions of process, whether it be one of a year's notice instead of 30 days and their relative merits(!), about legal requirements, etc., but these deflect us from the important question. Can LSU, its faculty and students, its upper administration and Boards, and Louisiana's Governor, Legislature and the public at large, seriously contemplate laying off all Instructors? If the answer is no, is it proper to hold out such a threat to an essential group?

If Instructors are essential (to all US universities, not just LSU), they should have more job security. Given the long years of education, training and dedication required for teaching college students, and that such specialized expertise makes it difficult to relocate into other jobs, one of the balancing attractions of a university faculty position (salaries are relatively modest) lies in that security. Without that incentive, even fewer of our brightest young people would choose this career path.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) advocates that all long-term faculty appointments be tenured, including Instructors who have served for several years. There are, however, also good arguments for holding both research and teaching as essential components for a tenured faculty member. Whatever the debate on these arguments, surely all who have served for many years and are essential to the functioning of the university must be [\(continued page 3\)](#)

## Transfer and Articulation (continued)

hours, "common course prerequisites and electives," which are intended to move students toward more focused areas of studies without limiting them to only one specific major. Updates on that program will follow.

### Transfer Students and Quality of Instruction: Caution and Vigilance

To date, the process for the development of the sixty-hour transfer credential has taken into account the tradition of faculty sovereignty over the curriculum and admissions requirements as well as faculty responsibility for the quality of instruction. The LSU Faculty Senate is unambiguously committed to the idea that courses accepted for credit at LSU should be subject to review by both the LSU faculty and by a statewide review board (such as the new General Education Committee or the Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council). Two warning signs have emerged that have called for vigilance by Faculty Senate officers. First, it appears that some courses under the canopy of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) are offered on an "off-site" basis, in non-campus facilities, where quality control may be difficult. Gen Ed Committee representative Kevin Cope has affirmed that transfer courses should be offered only at legitimate on-campus facilities by regular faculty. Second, the LCTCS campuses have argued that their SACS accreditation establishes that LCTCS courses should transfer without further evaluation to any campus. SACS accreditation, however, occurs at institution-appropriate levels, with research universities being held to a different set of standards than apply to community colleges. Again, the LSU System delegation affirms that courses used for credit in the LSU System must be subject to review by a board on which LSU and the four-year institutions have substantial membership..

### Truth in Benefits Declaration Resolution in Process

The Faculty Senate presently is deliberating several new pieces of legislation. In connection with the aforementioned discussion of the retirement and other benefit programs, and in an attempt to increase faculty leverage with educational management and with the retirement boards, a resolution has been proposed to require that all candidates for jobs with salaries over \$40,000.00 per annum be provided with a clear, plain-language description of the benefits packages as well as the uncertainties within it (for example, the ability of the retirement boards to cut the pass-through rate for employer contributions). It has come to the attention of the Senate that many job candidates, who are vulnerable insofar as they want to please hiring committees and not seem troublesome, are not being provided with full information about benefits or about the minimal magnitude of those benefits in relation to more generous packages offered at comparable institutions. This resolution is in the conditional voice and will take effect only if satisfactory progress on the benefits problem has not been made by the end of this academic year.

## EDUCATION OPINION (continued)

treated fairly.

Already ten years ago here at LSU, a Task Force of the Faculty Senate that studied these issues recommended an alternative, namely the use of rolling contracts in a parallel track to tenure (see *Academe* 86(3), 38(2000)). After a probationary period (a half dozen years, as on the tenure track?), Instructors whose employment is continued should get rolling contracts of some number of years. After all, there is precedence, in athletics, for such rolling contracts. While still keeping a distinction of tenure for those who combine research and teaching, but recognizing the need for teaching-only faculty (especially in some freshman and sophomore teaching), such a combination of tenure and rolling contracts that cover most of the faculty might bring more equity into the system.

Let us develop a meaningful policy for all the teachers at LSU.

A. R. P. Rau, Physics & Astronomy, [arau@phys.lsu.edu](mailto:arau@phys.lsu.edu)

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## The Future of the Flagship Discussed at Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forum

The first Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forum of the spring semester, entitled "Battling Navigators and Shifting Winds: The Future of the Flagship," was held February 10 in the Bo Campbell Auditorium of the Cox Center. The forum was well-attended by members of the faculty, administrators, and students interested in discussing the future of LSU as it faces nearly \$43 million in budget cuts.

Chancellor Mike Martin declared LSU to be in a "state of significant financial stress" and emphasized the importance of seeking more diverse forms of funding so that the university can decrease its dependence on state support. He discussed raising tuition and fees, increasing enrollment, building an endowment, and encouraging LSU faculty to be more entrepreneurial with respect to intellectual property. Martin said that while the intention was not to "outprice" anyone, "over time students have to pick up a bigger share."

When Martin opened the forum to questions, faculty expressed concern about the termination notices given to 219 LSU instructors in recent weeks. If necessary, the termination would be effective come 2011. Nearly 484 part and full-time instructors will eventually receive letters. However, Martin cautioned that the notifications went out because the university is required to give instructors one-year notice of termination, but that these notices are the equivalent of a hurricane warning, not an actual hurricane.

Justin Walsh, an associate professor of art, expressed concern that these terminations would have "a negative effect to the core" of LSU's teaching.

Others praised the quality of both LSU students and faculty. Social work professor and Faculty Senate executive committee member Priscilla Allen encouraged the Chancellor and the university community to tell citizens, students, and their families about the strength of LSU faculty and the stellar education its students are receiving. Allen said, "We shouldn't undersell ourselves. Why wouldn't they want to pay more for high quality?"

Faculty urged Martin to be a more vocal advocate for LSU with Governor Bobby Jindal. Martin responded that such efforts have come across as "self-serving" and suggested a "more holistic approach" that would involve local businesses and non-profit lobbying groups, many of whom support solid funding for LSU.

Tania Nyman, English instructor and organizer of the [Save LSU campaign](#), said the perception "that these cuts are due to the downturn of the economy is misleading," identifying the 2008 repealing of the income tax portions of the Stelly tax reforms as a major factor in dwindling revenues. She encouraged faculty and administration to talk with citizens and government about reforming tax structure.

The full picture of LSU's financial situation won't emerge until late June when the legislative session ends and final budgets are settled. Many faculty members discussed the importance of transparency and keeping lines of communication between faculty and administration open throughout this process. In response to such concerns the Chancellor's Office has launched a [website](#) to keep the LSU community informed on the latest with regards to the budget situation.

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## Southern University and UNO Outreach

The increasing influence of faculty governance in Louisiana results in part from the intensifying cooperation among Louisiana campus governance bodies. Two new milestones were passed this month. Steven Striffler of the University of New Orleans (UNO) addressed the LSU Faculty Senate concerning his statewide initiative to fortify higher education and to establish a more rational basis for its founding. Striffler's groundbreaking work toward creating a coalition helps to move us past the campus-versus-campus competition for resources that has plagued higher education for decades. Southern University Faculty Senate President Sudhir Trivedi invited both Striffler and LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope to Southern University to parlay with the Southern faculty about cooperation in the promotion of higher education and faculty initiatives that might go beyond more cautious administrative actions. treated fairly.

## RESX Now "Getting There," Problems Continue

RESX, the online travel reservations venue for state employees, has now become "Getting There." Although the interface has improved somewhat, it is clear that "Getting There" has not yet "gotten there." The new interface continues to present users with unreasonable challenges. The Faculty Senate is beginning to collect information about user experiences in the hope of improving our options. The fact that many administrators rely on assistant to make reservations may well account for the lack of attention to this bedeviling problem. Work continues.

## Coming up for Debate: Dead Week Adjustment

Studies conducted by the administration confirm that LSU's dead week is among the most rigorous in the nation and, perhaps worse, that faculty and instructors may be overinterpreting its guidelines, resulting in too many activities being planned, even those that may not involve students. Chancellor Martin has suggested an intention to consult with faculty on the cautious and experimental adjustment of dead week policies.

## LSU Negotiating with Adobe for Campus Licensing

Vice Chancellor for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer Brian Voss continues his negotiations with Adobe software for a site license for the Adobe suite, which includes popular graphics applications such as Dreamweaver, Acrobat, and InDesign. The Faculty Senate is relentlessly cheering CIO Voss as he works to bring this important, nay, indispensable software to campus.

## Faculty-Friendly Conference Slated for 2011

Chancellor Mike Martin has captured the directorship of the 2011 CLCU and ALFS co-conference. The Consortium of Louisiana Colleges and Universities and the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates frequently meet together to discuss common interests and the cooperative advancement of higher education in our state. Both are faculty-friendly organizations. Chancellor Martin has already announced an intention to work with faculty leaders to re-task both CLCU and ALFS in such a way that their practical effects might be amplified. Good work, Chief Tiger!

## Seen on the Street

It has been reported that our new Vice-Chancellor for Student Life and Enrollment Services, Kurt Keppler, who takes office May 1, has visited the campus to gather information and meet with new colleagues. The Faculty Senate strongly supported the candidacy of Dr. Keppler and eagerly anticipates the improvements he plans for student life, student recruitment, and the overall atmosphere on campus.

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Questions? Comments?

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